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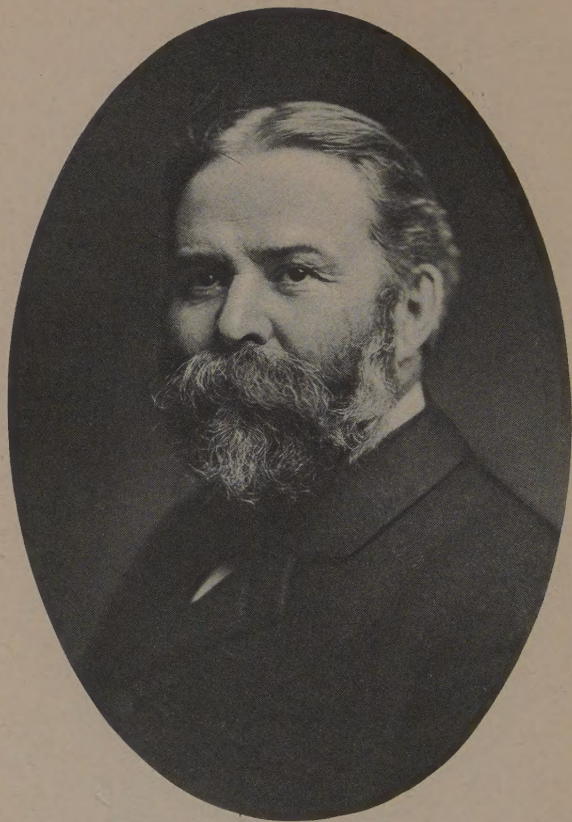


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The Methodist Pulpit

The Beauty of Jesus



Geo. Ellery

The Beauty of Jesus

Sermons preached in the Central Methodist
Episcopal Church, Detroit, Mich.

By the

REV. GEORGE ELLIOTT, D. D.

OF THE DETROIT CONFERENCE

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CINCINNATI: JENNINGS AND PYE
NEW YORK: EATON AND MAINS

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FOREWORD

THE discourses included in this volume have been prepared for publication by the somewhat artificial process of being reduced to writing after extemporaneous delivery. This will account to any who heard them for any lack of the spontaneity and directness they may have possessed when spoken in the inspiration of their presence. What is best in any sermon is as much due to the audience as to the preacher.

The only principle of selection employed was to present as large a variety of themes and treatment as possible within the limits allowed, and to include no message which had not been immediately useful, either in the awakening of conscience, the building up of faith and character, or persuasion to duty. All the sermons included have been delivered during the last three years.

G. E.

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I.

THE BEAUTY OF JESUS.

"Thou art fairer than the children of men."—

Psa. xiv, 2.

"He hath no form nor comeliness: and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him."—Isa. liii, 2.

IN the context of the passages from which the text is taken we see sharply contrasted the two great historical ideals of Israel—that of sovereignty and service. In the Messianic hope, Israel is seen through its coming king ruling the world in righteousness; on the other hand, in the prophetic vision, Israel through its representative, the Suffering Servant of Jehovah, is pictured as serving the world through surrender and sacrifice. In the New Testament both these passages are applied to Jesus Christ, who has taught the world that service and sovereignty are one; that a shameful cross may be the most glorious throne; that the servant of all is, by that very fact, Lord of all.

While we see clearly enough, in the main, how these diverging ideals have found harmonious interpretation in our Lord, yet it is not so easy to reconcile the details of the two pictures. How can we make the gracious and alluring beauty of the King agree with the uncomely and repelling features of the Servant? Was Jesus beautiful? And if He were, how shall we see in Him the marred visage that so disappointed the desire of man?

No authentic portrait of the Master has reached us. The legend of Veronica and the napkin with which she wiped the bloody sweat from His suffering face on the way to the cross, and which ever after bore the imprint of the sorrowful lineaments, like the other mediæval tale which credits the conventional portrait to the artistic gifts of St. Luke the evangelist, is but a beautiful fable born of the loving longing of minds too prone to marvelous fancies. Yet in all the representations made in the different ages of the Church, there is sufficient likeness to suggest some common artistic tradition which may have had a basis in reality.

In spite of these common features, the pictures of Jesus drawn by different times and schools have been very different. The youthful and joyous Good Shepherd of the catacombs was born of a simple

and childlike faith and the first gladness of the gospel proclamation. The stern and gloomy king of the Byzantine mosaics is a fit ideal for the faith that had grown imperial and despotic. The emaciated victim of the mediæval painters echoes the ascetic feeling of that long hermitage of the human spirit. Yet it is only a confused image which these make when we try to combine them in our minds into some pictorial unity.

Perhaps it is well that we have no picture. Each of us can frame for ourselves His likeness, and hang upon the walls of our imagination the face whose features are born of our own love's longing and our own inward communings with Him. How manifold the images we form of Him! To the child, He still lies on His mother's breast, or with open-eyed wonder stands putting strange questions to the Temple sages; to the laborer, He is still the carpenter toiling in the Nazareth workshop; to the tempted, He still meets the hard testing of the will in the wilderness and vanquishes the tempter by His unshaken trust; to the weary, He still sits resting upon the wayside well; to the bereaved, He still weeps beside the mourners at the tomb; to the tortured heart, He still endures Gethsemane's agony and bears its bloody sweat. We have seen "the glory of God in

the face of Jesus Christ," but it was the glory of "grace and truth," which bears for us the changing reflection of all our earthly vicissitudes.

The religious art of the world has responded to this varied idealization. Each nation and race has painted a Christ of its own; artists have everywhere seen in Him their own ideal. In marble and on canvas the one conventional face has passed through the metamorphic fires of all human experience and feeling; it saddens with sorrows, is distorted with pain, melts in tenderness, shines in the transfiguring light of joy, is hard set with determined courage, and calm with fathomless peace.

Can you not see how hard it is to answer the question, Is He beautiful? The truth is, that He is beautiful or repulsive according to the sympathy with Him which is in the heart of the beholder. The prophet expresses the aspect of Jesus to the world that despises and rejects Him; the psalmist paints the exultant vision of the Church that loves and worships Him.

I. HE IS WITHOUT BEAUTY TO THE SPIRIT OF THIS WORLD.

The picture of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah pictures the place which He holds in the world's regard: "We esteemed Him not." The martyr and

the victim are not welcomed by the natural heart of man; still less, the Atoning Sacrifice. And so it has become His lot to be the best beloved and the worst hated of all beings. When at last the predestined Victim came in the flesh, He won the cruel hate of all but a very few, and they were willing to die with Him and for Him.

1. *He is marred by suffering.*

The sufferer is the problem of philosophy and the test of faith. Pain is the world's chief mystery, the stumbling-block of humanity. Men are staggered by the unfailing tragedy which somewhere touches every life; it puzzles the reason, confuses the conscience, and paralyzes the will. The earliest literatures of all peoples are anxiously concerned about the sufferer. Tortured Prometheus, writhing on Caucasus while the vultures prey upon his vitals, is but a type of the anguished victim who strides through all the literature and art of the world with maddened brain and bleeding heart, making futile guesses at the unexplained agony of our human life. Only as men forget the sufferer have they found the fair ideals of passionless peace or glowing joy in which the sense of beauty rejoices.

Beauty is the child of joy; it has no relation with the bed of pain or the horror of the shadow of

death. We look for it, and we see it, not in the wrinkles of age, the emaciation of disease, the weary lines of pain or the writhings of youth, but in the glowing vigor of health and the smiles of gladness.

Our Lord is a "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief." In His weary, weeping face, marred with the experience of suffering and sympathetically reflecting a world's woe, the world sees that which it most abhors and from which it shrinks instinctively.

Jesus may have been a beautiful Babe. All lines of possible human loveliness may have marked the form pressed against the Holy Virgin's breast. Doubtless it was a fair-faced boy that grew up in the humble home at Nazareth and charmed the doctors with its grace as the sweet lips spoke words of more than childish wisdom in the Temple. That boyish beauty did not, could not last. His whole life-story, with its culminating tragedy, was only fitted to mar the loveliness which had filled Mary's heart with fond pride as He lay in her loving arms. Nay, she herself, who was "full of grace," became at last the very mother of sorrows. And Jesus, when at last the lines of premature age and care write themselves in His face, at last flayed by the Roman scourge and torn by the thorny crown, His hair and beard

clotted with His own gore and the spittle of rude soldiers' insult, when Pilate cries, "Behold the Man!" Was He beautiful? Let Guido's pathetic picture, "*Ecce Homo*," partly tell the story. The world has looked in answer to Pilate's challenge and turned away in repulsion, finding no beauty in Him, that they should desire Him.

2. *The Suffering Savior is a repellent ideal to the Pagan spirit.*

A skeptical historian has written that the painted crucifix is "the most repulsive object ever presented to the groaning adoration of mankind." Such is the real spirit of all mundane culture, not always so frankly avowed. The Hellenists of Greece and Rome, who were dismayed by the conquests of the pale Galilean; the sensuous epicures of the Italian Renaissance drunken with their sense of beauty, and our modern Neo-Pagans, who prate of "art for art's sake,"—all are but so many expressions of the world-spirit to which the preaching of the Cross is foolishness. The Pagan ideal is one of abounding health and of sensuous beauty, untouched by any hint of the world's woe, and, in its buoyant joyousness, far away from the "Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief." No wonder that our æsthetic

class have little shame to prefer Apollo to the Christ, and Venus to the Madonna.

In a popular French romance, of which Swinburne says,

“This is the golden book of spirit and sense,
The holy writ of beauty,”

it is written :

“O, ancient world! all that you held in reverence is held in scorn by us. Thine idols are overthrown in the dust; fleshless anchorites clad in rags and tatters, martyrs with the blood fresh on them, and their shoulders torn by the tigers of the circuses, have perched themselves on the pedestal of thy fair desirable gods. The Christ has enveloped the whole earth in His winding-sheet. . . . O purity, plant of bitterness, born on a bloodsoaked soil, and whose degenerate and sickly blossom expands with difficulty in the damp shade of cloisters, under a chill baptismal rain; rose without scent and spiked all round with thorns, . . . the ancient world knew thee not. O sterile flower! thou wast never enwoven in its chaplets of delirious perfume. In that vigorous and healthy society, they would have spurned thee under foot disdainfully. Purity, mysticism, melancholy—three words unknown to thee,

three new maladies brought into our life by the Christ!"

Ah, yes! our worldlings "spurn under foot disdainfully" the Christian conception of a suffering Savior. It finds the frank, full, and, let us hope, final statement in its favorite philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, the chosen teacher of thousands of our very modern young men, whose indictment against Christianity is that—

"Everything strong, brave, domineering, and proud has been eliminated out of the concept of God, when He sinks step by step to the symbol of a staff for the fatigued, a sheet-anchor for all drowning ones; when He becomes a poor people's God, the God of the sick *par excellence*, . . . the God of the nooks, the God of all dark places and corners, of all unhealthy quarters throughout the world! His world empire is still, as formerly, an underworld empire, a hospital, a subterranean empire, a Ghetto empire, and He Himself, so pale, so weak, so decadent!"

Nietzsche has a fine gift for blasphemy; forgive me for quoting his wild ravings. I would not defile this holy place and hour with this foul creed of æstheticism and culture were it not well that our

worldly Christians may for once stand face to face with the logical outcome of the secular scheme of life. Every soul who shrinks from the cross, and thereby affirms an outward and selfish aim for life, has practically denied Spirit and declined to the worship of sense.

3. *The ideal of sacrifice and suffering seems to destroy the beauty of life as it appears to the natural man.*

The whole conception of the Christian life as found in the New Testament is most repellent to unregenerate nature. Jesus makes the shadow of the cross fall across the whole of life. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it." We are called to be "crucified with Christ," called to the "fellowship of His sufferings." He has set up His cross in the pathway of our dearest longings and most ardent desires; our selfishness turns away from His sad features to the smiling welcome of the god of this world.

Youth does not find Him beautiful; for He is the rival to their frivolous pleasures, the spoil-sport of

thoughtless mirth. He is shunned as a social kill-joy by those who forget how He made glad the marriage-feast. The question of worldly amusements is a much deeper one than appears to the Pharisee fond of a preceptive morality. Worldliness as a spirit is a far more subtle and dangerous enemy of our Master than is dreamed of by the narrow precisians who construct for the Christian life a crazy-quilt of negative requirements, and call that spirituality! "In the name of the Lord Jesus" is a phrase whose wide meaning is the last test of loyalty. The cross stands at the parting of the ways where youth makes the great decision.

The business man finds Him a meddler and mar-plot, a hindrance to all selfish gains. We no longer erect crosses in the market-place; commerce has little place for the spirit of sacrifice.

Society does not desire a suffering Savior. It is largely made up of surfaces, and is enamored of surface beauty. It loves physical comfort and luxury, and shrinks from self-denial. The name of a hospital on the program of the charity ball is about as near as the world of fashion dares to come to the purlieu of pain. The great trinity of the world-spirit, "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," stands squarely opposed to the Di-

vine passion whose love finds its consummation in sorrow and sacrifice.

4. *The Church is in danger of ignoring the prophet's ideal.*

Even those who profess discipleship are lukewarm in His service and shirk His utmost demands. He asks so much, and seems to promise so little. He asserts His right, and offers no pleasures in return. The Church too often tries to hide the cross. It has tampered with the Gospel, and painted a meretricious and sensuous heaven; it has glossed over the hard sayings of the Master, and explained away the mountain teaching and the cross example. Another Paul might well cry out, in the presence of the easy-going, time-serving religion, too prevalent in every age of the Church, "Then is the offense of the cross ceased!"

In the effort to make religion attractive, laudable enough if we appeal to the real ground of its attractiveness, we are in danger of concealing its central truth, the atoning sacrifice, and its demand for the cross-bearing life. Like the crosses shaped of virgin gold and gemmed with diamonds, that adorn the breast of beauty; like the Easter crosses of

languishing lilies or voluptuous roses, that deck our altars of worship,—so has the Church striven by æsthetic arts to suppress the sufferer and only see the conquering King.

You profess to admire Him; you have exhausted human arts to make music to praise Him, and rich crowns to deck His brow; why, then, do you not really follow Him as He commanded? why do you prefer pleasure, gain, worldly success, and all selfish ends? It is all in vain that we hang garlands on the cross; the rough wood is there, with the cruel tearing of the nails and the sharp torment of the thorns. “His visage is marred more than the sons of men.” There is no beauty in Him to the spirit of this world.

II. HE IS ALTOGETHER LOVELY TO THOSE WHO TRULY LOVE AND FOLLOW HIM.

“Thou art fairer than the children of men.” What if the psalmist is right, and He is beautiful after all? What if our æsthetic standards are wrong and true beauty something quite other than we have dreamed? May not the whole world be as utterly blind as the Hottentot who prefers his fat Venus to the classic lines of the Venus of Milo? If we do

not desire Him, the fault is ours; our standard is false. Our appetite, perverted at the banquet of earthly delights, has lost relish for the Bread of heaven; our fine dresses seem fairer and richer than the robes of righteousness; our jewels shine more splendidly to our sight than the "pearl of great price."

1. *In Holy Scripture our Lord is as closely associated with Beauty as with Suffering.*

The most beautiful things are used to describe Him. He calls Himself the Bridegroom, and to this lover of the soul we have, with reason, applied the glowing images of the nuptial odes ascribed to Solomon. He is the "fairest among ten thousand," and is "altogether lovely." He is the Rose of Sharon, all garden beauties pale in the sight of His loveliness; He is the Lily of the Valley, outrivaling all forest fragrances; He is the bright and the Morning Star, most brilliant of all the orbs that glorify the night; He is the Sun of righteousness, the world's fountain of light and beauty.

He is at once the archetype and the artificer of all beauty. In His eternal imagining it was born, and by His creative energy brought to birth. All

tints are painted by His brush, all forms created by His touch.

He dearly loved beautiful things. Flowers blossomed in His speech, and the bird-song lent softer music to His voice. Little children—those buds of the world's promise, fair with the fresh beauty of all first things, the first light of morning, the first flowers of spring, and the golden age of the world—were welcomed to His arms and made glad by His blessing. He chose for His favorite haunts the loveliest spots in the Holy Land, the hills about Nazareth, the grand heights of Hermon, and the rippling waters of sweet Galilee.

All beauty is at last the beauty of God, and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." Was He a hungry peasant in a working garb, tired, fatigued, lonely, with hands hardened at the carpenter's bench, and raiment dusty with weary wanderings? Still the glory at times shone through, until upon Hermon, in transfigured splendor, heaven breaks through the walls of earth and the chosen three beheld His glory. How the vision burned itself into their souls! They never could forget it, and a generation later Peter writes, "We were eyewitnesses

of His majesty, for He received from God the Father honor and glory;" while, surviving two generations, the best beloved, who had lain on His bosom and seen deepest into His heart, cries, "We beheld His glory!"

2. *The beauty of Jesus is the beauty of the Duty ideal.*

Beauty is more than form and color; it lies deeper than the flesh, and its deepest life is in the soul. Even the Greeks, with all their delight in physical grace and symmetry, felt this, and loved to use their word for beauty as a synonym for goodness.

"I slept, and dreamed that life was beauty;
I woke, and found that life was duty."

The waking thought does not deny the glory of the dream. The worldly ideal is true enough, but too narrow to express the fullness of life. For life is more than shapely form, and glowing tint, and sensuous charm. It is more than feeling; it is also thought and action. The beauty of Jesus is the nobler beauty of the deed; His will moves always on the lines of a diviner perfection. That which is best in us worships moral above merely physical beauty.

Duty! it hath no form nor comeliness; it is grim-visaged with the awful severity of Law; yet, to the obedient, it takes an angelic grace. Well does Wordsworth say in his "Ode to Duty:"

"Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we any thing so fair
As is the smile upon thy face.
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads."

The duty ideal bears the marks of wounds. It can achieve its highest only by the way of sacrifice. Its hands are hard with toil; its back is bent with burdens; its features are deep-lined with care; it is scarred and marred by suffering. And yet it, too, is beautiful. To be sure, a fond and doting mother would prefer her son, a finely-formed athlete in the glory of youthful strength and abounding health, rather than a helpless cripple or a wasted consumptive. But there is something better than that! She knew it when he came home bearing the glorious scars of a heroic deed, won in defense of God or home or native land. Love sees love's service in the marred face, and leaps out to meet it in a new admiration, whose tenderness finds it more fair than all old fondness ever dreamed.

Love means Suffering. Sacrifice is its utmost expression. Even Plato, most Christian of all Pagan seers, knew that the face of love must be a marred face. In the "Symposium" he says:

"Love is always poor, and is far from being fair and tender as the many suppose, but is lean, ill-formed, shoeless, and homeless, a poor penniless wanderer, sleeping at doorways, or on waysides with the sky above him."

Even so the Love that was Divine in form and feature did not think that likeness of glory a thing worth His grasping, but, stripping Himself of heavenly splendors, assumed the form of the slave, and "being formed in fashion as a man, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," and thus He won the crown of highest sovereignty.

In this moral beauty, Jesus has no rival; He is the "fairest of the children of men." It is the voice of Jehovah in the same psalm: "Because Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." To our inward sense the cross, with all its shame, stands as the loveliest thing in all the universe. It stands as the symbol of the deed of all deeds most beauti-

ful; it shines with the beauty of God, revealing the soft splendor of redeeming love.

“For so the Word had flesh, and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds
More strong than all poetic thought.”

3. *The beauty of the suffering Savior is a spiritual beauty.*

There is a “light that never was on land or sea,” a glory that the eyes of sense shall never see,—it is the beauty of the redeemed spirit, and is seen only by spiritual vision. Bodily beauty is only skin-deep, and to the gaze that penetrates beneath the surface it vanishes; the X-rays reveal the skeleton.

Modern art has not rivaled the Greek power of expression; its real and surpassing glory is, that it has dared to attempt more, has tried to interpret the spirit of man. In Christian art a new kind of beauty has been born, a rare and exquisite thing, luminous with the radiance of the unseen world. Hear Robert Browning portray this deeper ideal:

“Paint man, man, whatever the issue!
Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters;
To bring the invisible into full play,
Let the visible go to the dogs! what matters?”

The sight of the worldling can not compass this nobler vision; he can not see the real beauty of the marred face. It must be "spiritually discerned." But the eyes of spiritual insight see beneath all mere prettiness. External fairness may cover spiritual foulness. As in the Greek fable, let the philosopher's gaze fall on the comely face of Lamia, and the enchantment breaks, and she is seen to be what she is, a serpent. Ah! it is saddening enough sometimes, this sudden revelation of character, blazing through its outward mask. We visited the palaces of pleasure and pride, and mingled in the glad gayety of society, and suddenly the revealing flash came. We saw beneath the fair faces that smiled on us the signs of approaching corruption, the petty vanity, the selfish spirit, the suppressed ill-temper, the disguised deceit, the lines of cruelty and of sensuality. Ugliness was there, hiding beneath the mask of beauty, and the fair face was fair no more. Yes, and often beneath plain features and uncouth forms, our eyes have caught a glimpse of a shining soul; it was a hint of the spiritual body which transforms earth's dishonor into heaven's glory; it was a foregleam of the resurrection.

The peasant artist, Millet, has in immortal pictures portrayed beauty hidden beneath homely things

and homely lines. O, if we could only see souls, the world would be changed to us! Many a fair face would grow hideous, and many a deformed body would shine as the casket of spiritual and immortal loveliness.

And this is the beauty of our Lord. All heavenly ideals have left their lines of beauty in His perfect character and perfect life. This is the beauty of the glorified Lord, who, having been made "perfect through suffering," has now shined in human hearts through the effusion of the Spirit. It is the beauty and glory of God, and it shines for us in the face of Jesus Christ.

4. *The Suffering Savior is not an ascetic ideal.*

Jesus is neither æsthetic nor ascetic. He does not correspond to the standards of worldly desire and esteem; neither does His life and teaching give any countenance to those who would abandon the world, despising its beauty and neglecting its duty. The stoic, the Buddhist, the monk say: "Renounce! flee from this dying, decaying world! Give yourself wholly to the unseen life." But the cross simply erects a new scale of values; in its light the world becomes a means and not an end. We learn to "use the world as not abusing it." To this illumined

vision the creation, once our delight, gains a new glory as revealing the Creator. Its mountain altars become white with the snows of His holiness, and kindle their altar-fires at the touch of His finger; its lilies are the spotless raiment of His purity, and all the flowers of the field are fragrant with His breath; the breezes swing the censer of perpetual incense. Therefore has God kindled the mornings, embroidered the meadows, and hung the lamps of the midnight, that we might see in it all the "living, visible garment of God."

"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush aflame with God."

The ascetic ideal sees only the marred face of the sufferer, the figure without "form or comeliness," and does not behold the real beauty in and beneath it. For asceticism is devoid of love, and love is linked with beauty in all philosophies and all faiths. Denial of the world is not self-denial. The Man of Sorrows "came into the world to save sinners;" the mystic devotee goes out of the world to save himself. The whitest sanctity of the kingdom can not be achieved by cloistered souls. The sneer of culture has too often identified Christianity with asceticism, and on that ground given its suffrage to the "healthy sensuality" of Paganism. That is to miss

the meaning of the cross. Atoning sacrifice, vicariously borne through a voluntary act of all-surrendering love,—that is the supreme beauty of Jesus; and it is worlds away from the self-regarding virtue of asceticism. Listen to the words of the great prophetic poet, who sings the song of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah:

“But our sickness alone He bore,
And our pains—He carried them,
Whilst we esteemed Him stricken
Smitten of God and afflicted.

But alone He was humiliated because of our rebellions,
Alone He was crushed because of our iniquities;
A chastisement, all for our peace, was upon Him,
And to us came healing through His stripes.

All we, like sheep, had gone astray,
We had turned every one to his own way,
While Jehovah made to light upon Him
The iniquity of us all.”

“Forasmuch as he poured out His life-blood,
And let Himself be reckoned with the rebellious,
While it was He who had borne the sin of many,
And for the rebellious had interposed.”

That is no picture of ascetic renunciation to win personal perfection, but of loving self-denial for the salvation of others.

O, my beloved, does the sermon need any application? Does not the uplifted Christ draw you?

Does not that vision of mingled sorrow and love touch some finer sense than all the fair shows of the world's pleasure, power, or pride? Will you win for yourself this higher beauty? There is something gladder than pleasure, more glorious than gain, more splendid than success. It is found in the way of the cross, in the footsteps of Jesus.

There is a beauty that lies beyond beauty, and can only be reached by the road of pain. My friend had a noble voice, that had been carefully trained by the greatest masters. It was a noble organ, used with matchless technique. Yet, somehow, it did not touch us. We admired, but were not thrilled in the depths of the spirit. Suddenly a great sorrow came into her life, and it has added the note of true passion to the glorious voice, and made it sovereign to sway hearts. The men of sorrows have given the world its truly greatest poems, pictures, and music.

“They learned in suffering what they teach in song.”

Even so, the life of truest loveliness, of highest holiness and noblest service, is only wrought out by the discipline of pain. We are, like our Lord, “made perfect through suffering.” Walking in the way of the cross, by the transfiguring power of the Lord,

the Spirit, we shall be "changed into the same image, even from glory into glory."

Sovereignty and Service, the King and the Sufferer—in the human God and the Divine man we find united the ideals of Beauty and Duty. They may be so united in our lives; "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." The Cross and the Crown meet in the Christian conception of life; for loving self-surrender and spiritual mastery are one. The beauty of Jesus—it may be ours. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us."

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II.

THE MACEDONIAN CRY.

"And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; there stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us."—Acts xvi, 9.

THE context from which the text is taken is remarkable for two reasons. In the first place, it begins the only strictly personal narration in the New Testament, the so-called "We-narrative" of Acts. We have here, most probably, an absolutely original source, a long extract from the travel diary of the beloved physician, Luke, who joined Paul at Troas, and accompanied him to Philippi, where he seems to have been left in charge of that new-formed Macedonian Church.

But the account is still more interesting for the second reason; it is the story of the beginnings of world evangelization. We stand here at the well-head of that river of gracious influences, which here, bursting its Asiatic bounds, has widened into the

Christian civilization of Western Europe and America. How little did Nero, upon his imperial throne, the contending politicians of the decadent Roman Senate, the busy merchants and pleasure-seekers of Corinth, or the pedantic philosophers of Athens, suspect that on the borders of the west, facing toward the sunset there stood a Jewish tentmaker, with his humble companions, whose message and ministry should change the whole character of the empire and turn the entire trend of earthly history. Such is the outward insignificance and the real greatness of the event we are about to study.

I. THE PLACE AND THE PERIOD WERE BOTH STRATEGIC.

Here at the Hellespont, then, as now, dull Asia comes face to face with energetic Europe; it is a world meridian parting the East from the West. Even now, after nineteen centuries, it is the most important frontier in all the world.

1. *The place is rich in historic interest.*

It is in the Troad, at or near the site of ancient Ilium, whose fall is storied in the childhood of the world. The scene is full of historic associations and of stimulus to the historic imagination. Paul did not

need to be a great classical scholar to be familiar with the story of the Iliad, which was woven into the very fiber of the Hellenic peoples of Hellas and Asia Minor. Troas is thronged with great memories,—of Troy town and its tragic tale; of Priam's palace and its fatal fall. Here are the graves of Hector and Achilles, the rival heroes of the East and West, and the scenes made immortal by the undying song of the blind bard of Greece; here rise the story-haunted mountains, such as sacred Ida; and storied streams, the Scamander and the Granicus, that once ran red with heroes' blood and rolled their shields and bodies to the sea, and whose silver ripples still seem to sing a strange poetry of the past.

Not only so, but it looks westward, across the Ægean, whose islands, Tenedos, Lemnos and Lesbos, bear names full of fabled glory. This narrow strait connecting the Euxine and the Ægean is the gateway by which from dawn of time, nations have passed in their migrations and armies in their conquests. This way mad Xerxes led his barbarian hordes to overrun Greece, only to be hurled back as the wild waves are by the rocks; this way Alexander came to the conquest of the East, unknowingly casting up a highway on which the footsteps of Jesus marched to victory; and by this road the Roman

legions carried the imperial eagles, and with their short swords carved out a universal empire. And here, at last, stands this visionary Jew, with his three humble companions, looking across the Hellespont and Ægean Sea, not wholly unmindful, we think, of the mighty human story they recall, yet dreaming of a world conquest more divine than ever burned in the stern souls of warriors or of kings.

2. It is a notable episode in the history of the "Eastern Question."

The East is facing the West. There has always been an Eastern Question, and there always will be, until the Lord Christ's kingdom comes in perfect power—that kingdom in which there is neither "Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free." The contest between Oriental and Occidental ideals is irrepressible; peace can only come when they are both fused in nobler and more inclusive world-ideals. The contest has gone on since time immemorial; its beginnings are lost in legend. The fabled rape of Europa (which still gives its name to the Bosphorus); the rape of Helen, and the Trojan war that ensued; the Persian wars which raised Greece to greatness; the conquests of Alexander, Pompey, and Cæsar; the conflict with the Moslem from the

crusades down to the present dying throes of the "Sick Man of Europe;" the contest between Saxon and Slav for Asiatic supremacy,—all these are but the external incidents of a spiritual struggle between the East and the West, the past and the future, the old and the new, the living and the dead. Byzantium is still the gate of empire; well does the unspeakable Turkish sultan, who rules there, call himself the Sublime Porte; i. e., the High Gate.

And yet there is one supreme gift that the Orient has given to the world—religious faith. Monotheism was born in the awful silences of those deserts, where "man is distant and God is near." No great religion has been born on any but Asiatic soil. Light comes from the East, but travels with the sun. "Westward the course of empire takes its way." In Paul we see the greatest of all the many instruments who have brought the Light of the East to be re-kindled in Western hearts. This was the supreme test of the gospel; it had won in Western Asia; could it succeed in Europe? The partially Orientalized Hellenists of Asia Minor have been easily touched by the new faith; will the cultivated Grecian and stout Roman listen as readily? Will the proud Aryan be arrested by the message of the Semite? The journey proposed by Paul, from Troas to Phil-

ippi, was short in miles, but it lay from pole to pole of the human spirit.

Without anticipating our further discussion, you know the result. The Pauline solution of the "Eastern Question" was triumphant wherever applied. Racial and political lines are lost in the radiance of this sunburst of salvation. The prow of Paul's little ship, as it cleaved the blue Ægean, not only flung into foam those classic waters, but cut to tatters the artificial distinctions of law and custom, as well as the deeper natural characteristics of race and national spirit. Henceforth the true Israel are all mankind. Indeed, there is something typical in that first Church he founded in Macedonia. It inclosed many and varied national types; its charter members were a Jewish proselyte woman who had come thither from Asia Minor, a Greek slave girl with the sinister reputation of a Pythoness or inspired mouth-piece of Apollo, and a Roman officer, the jailer of the town. It was a prophecy of that universal Church which still remains to be realized.

3. *It was a time of world-crisis.*

The period was not less significant than the place. The West was in search of a religion; ancient cults were losing their charm; Ethnic faiths were

decadent; the temples were crumbling and the old gods were becoming forgotten. There had been preparation, both in politics and in culture, for the new faith. The conquests of Alexander and Cæsar had given the world a universal empire under whose protecting ægis of law the gospel was sheltered. Greece gives to the East its language of common intercourse, the richest and most marvelous tongue ever spoken among men. The boy Paul, in Tarsus, learned as the common speech of his childhood the language in which he afterward preached in Macedonia and Achaia. Plato and Aristotle had opened intellectual doors which the new faith readily entered, enriching its simple spiritual ethic with their philosophic statement. The human race had come of age to receive its royal inheritance; it was the "fullness of the times."

It was also a crisis in the life of Paul. His own wish was to complete his Asiatic triumphs. He looks longingly toward Bithynia, and southward toward proconsular Asia. In some mysterious way God closes up every path. He can turn neither northward nor southward, and he can not go back, while a vision of the night guides him forward and westward. The chaotic social and moral world lies plastic to the brooding Spirit of God. The place and

period are providential, and Paul is under providential guidance. The new mission grew out of his thwarted plans.

II. THE MAN AND HIS MESSAGE ARE MATCHED WITH THE PROVIDENTIAL PURPOSE.

Paul is the man for the opportunity. He is a Hebrew of the Hebrews, learned in the law of Israel, versed in its history, saturated with its ideals; he was born a Roman citizen, and can everywhere plead the protection of Roman justice for his work; he was born in a great Grecian city, and could speak the Greek language, and had absorbed to some extent its philosophy and culture. By character, birth, and training, he was the predestined world evangelist, the chosen apostle of expansion. If we count Jesus as we must, the first and greatest of all missionaries, next to Him we must certainly place Paul, who so passionately loved and so loyally served his Master.

1. *He is a man of visions.*

His conversion was caused by a vision beheld at noonday on the Damascus road. His ministry was guided by direct revelations through sight and speech from God. A supernatural element filled his

life and shaped it. He was under a heavenly control, and is ever sensitive to the Divine guidance. To our modern Sadduceeism all this savors of fanaticism and mysticism. Yet there is in it nothing exceptional or strange. If our lives are without this constant shaping by the unseen hands, it is because we constantly leave God out of our programs and plans of life. If we would live on Paul's high level, we, too, would be led by great inspirations and have mighty monitions of the unseen. We, too, may "see visions and dream dreams," and have the pillar of cloud and fire to mark paths for us through the blind wilderness of our thwarted purposes. Every great work begins in a dream. The lofty souls who have dared greatly and done nobly were those who first had dreamed splendidly.

2. He is a man of heart.

The day-dream came to the right man. The world's need was great; it lay in the arms of the wicked one, and was submerged in poverty, ignorance, and sin. The anguished cry of the great human tragedy could not be heard by any shut-up soul. Nero, the emperor, that graceful tiger, with his superficial, sensuous love of beauty, his dilettant culture, and his cruel heart, could see the voluptuous

lines of a Greek statue and enjoy the "linked sweetness" of "soft Lydian airs," but he had no eyes to see debased manhood, or ears to hear the wail of suffering humankind. The vision could not come to the petty politician of the Senate, nor to any stern soldier of the legions, nor to some severe Stoic or easy-going Epicurean of Athens, nor to a purse-proud trader of Corinth or Alexandria. The call came to a heart full of all human tenderness, one who could greatly love and nobly sacrifice. This is the quality to which God makes appeal for help in His redemption task, and it is this quality which mankind at last shall crown above all others.

3. *He is a man of action.*

With Paul to hear is to obey. He is no impracticable dreamer, but a practical man, who translates his dream into reality and by his visions shapes his life. It was so from that first call to service on the Damascus road; he "was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." His dream cost him something. It meant more than to paint it in a glorious speech; it meant suffering and sacrifice, with martyrdom at the end of it all. So when the Divine vision and voice comes, he acts as becomes the bondservant of Jesus Christ. The hand of God is upon him, and

before another night can bring another dream his boat is plowing toward the sunset, answering the call for help.

One could imagine his friends trying to dissuade him. Silas might say: "It is just like you, Paul. You would not stay at Antioch, but would on to Cyprus and Asia Minor. If you should reach Macedonia, you would not be content, but would go to Corinth and Athens, and then begin to plan a voyage to Rome. And even that would n't satisfy you, but I suppose you will press on to Spain and Britain. Nor would you rest there, but would stand beside the western sea of darkness, and begin to dream of that fabled lost Atlantis beyond." And then Dr. Luke might exhort: "Consider your frail health, Brother Paul. Remember how you took the gripe on the unhealthy Pamphilian coast, and the illness which followed in Galatia. You have n't been the same man since. It has left a thorn in your flesh, which will probably last as long as you live."

But it was not for long that they thus argued, if at all. They soon were all of the same mind; for we are told that "putting things together [all the providential indications], they assuredly gathered" that it was God's will that they should go to Macedonia. And so these four great simple-

minded, wise-hearted children set out to conquer Europe. Not theirs the visions of battles, but a nobler vision of manhood delivered and souls redeemed.

4. *Paul had a message of world-wide meaning.*

He was by conviction the apostle of expansion. The circumstances of his conversion and call had given him a wider conception of the gospel than the Jerusalem Church had yet attained. He had broken through Jewish exclusiveness, and made the whole world his parish. To him humanity was one; all lost in Adam, and all included in the mercy of the Cross. He had a universal message, one that could be translated into universal speech. Beneath all racial types, national traits, differences in customs, and culture, he saw the moral unity of man. Neither anthropology, ethnology, nor philology could stand in the way of his mission. These cleavages do not go very deep after all. All hearts know the dark mystery of sin and can comprehend the bright message of redeeming and pardoning love. It is a test of a true gospel that it can be translated into all the forms of human speech and human thought.

Christianity is a universal religion. Christ is the Desire of all nations, the solitary Hope of a dy-

ing race. Other teachers—Socrates, Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster—may have been, in some sense, true prophets of God; but there is but one Savior. His is an empire overlapping Rome; the Holy Dove shall outfly her eagles and the dark raven of sin; upon His cross Greece shall hang her laurels. The gospel is power, universal power for salvation; its ambassador is not ashamed to proclaim it in philosophic Athens, voluptuous Corinth, commercial Ephesus, pagan Antioch, or imperial Rome.

III. THE VISION AND THE VOICE ARE BOTH SIGNIFICANT.

Visions are revealers of life. What we are determines what we see, whether waking or sleeping. We dream of what is in our minds. The miser's eyes are full of the yellow luster of his gold; the mother sees in fancy the fair face of her babe; the merchant beholds bargains and profitable ventures; the soldier's sleep is stirred with the sounds of strife. What does such a man as Paul see in his vision?

I. *He saw a man.*

It may be significant that no note is made of any class distinction. It is a man,—not a priest, warrior, laborer, king, peasant, or philosopher; it is

a representation of our common humanity, and thus a mouthpiece of groaning creation, with a voice tuned to utter the sigh of the race. To be sure he is specialized as a Macedonian; the dream that leads to duty must be definite.

"As Jesus passed by He saw a man." Love puts the human interest in the center of all its pictures; nothing else is so pathetic and inspiring. Yet we are often blind to it. Books, art, sciences, dollars, all may shut out our brother's face. And when we do try to study the human problems we are so apt to see masses, not man. The devil wants us to argue abstractly rather than concretely, and he therefore tries to obscure our vision of the individual. Your sham reformer has some social nostrum for saving society, and only a lukewarm interest in personal effort for saving souls. And so sociology is substituted for salvation and reformation for redemption. It is all in vain. Every great question of human welfare—the drink question, the labor conflict, the problems of criminology—are of living interest only because they touch human flesh and blood. And no questions are worth more than passing discussion which do not somewhere touch the quick nerves of human feeling. O, that our eyes might be opened to this vision, sad yet stimulating, of man, solitary in his sin, sorrow, and suffering!

2. *He saw a man in need.*

It is a man in earnest, who cries, "Come, help!" It is not implied that Macedonia was conscious of its need. No deputation came to meet Paul on his arrival; no crowds greeted him at Philippi. But the world's want is a call upon our hearts for sympathy and succor. The call was really from God, who inspired the vision; for every vision of need is a command of Christ. The wretchedness of the world is a pull on the heartstrings of every true Christian. These visible voices greet us in our own streets; while the far-off heathen world out of its unspeaking need cries: "Guide us, for we are blind; comfort us, for we are sad; deliver us, for we are in bondage; help us, for we are weak; save us, for we are lost."

3. *Notice Paul's interpretation of the Voice.*

"Help!" What does it mean? It might have meant many things to other minds. The semi-civilized and undeveloped races, and heathen countries generally, cry with a various language to our civilized ears. In every open door the merchant sees a call for commerce or a chance for exploiting their undeveloped resources; the soldier sees the need of

subjugation and conquest; the statesman sees a new opportunity to play the pretty game of world politics. Recent events have shown that alleged Christian nations are but too ready, under the disguise of alleged military necessity, commercial greed, and "spheres of influence," to disregard utterly all the rights of the weaker nationalities. It is not civilization which the world needs, but the gospel. There is no greater peril than a dead-ripe civilization, without religious and human ideals. For it is only the salvation of Jesus that can bring real liberty. Enlightenment, peace, and culture,—they may be a bane rather than a blessing without it. Probably there is not another nation in the world which is in so great a moral and social danger as the Empire of Japan in its mad haste to adopt the fruitage of Western civilization without passing through the process by which that fruit grew, blossomed, and burst into beauty.

Paul knew better. The world needs help, and the gospel is the help it needs. And so he brought them, not new inventions, fresh speculations, fond philosophies, armies and warships, but a new life in God. Nor did he bring them a religious war, a mere crusade against idols, priests, and temples, but a man's ministry to manhood, the new brother-

liness born of our love of our Father which is in heaven and the cross of our Brother and Redeemer.

4. *What was the outcome of the vision?*

At first, apparently, only little. He came to Philippi to find, not a man, but a company of women holding a prayer-meeting in a quiet nook by the river-side. Yet there began the first Church in Europe, the most loved and most loving Church of the New Testament. Under Paul's preaching, Jesus Christ won that day a nobler victory than that which Julius Cæsar had won at Philippi a generation or two before. It began with the conquest of a woman's heart, but it meant the subjugation of the Western world to the Cross. In the background of the dream, behind the man with his beckoning hands and pleading voice, was all Greece and imperial Rome; more, there were, in shadowy distances, the vigorous Northern nations and far-off America itself, then lying hidden in the secrecy of God and the fastnesses of His purpose, awaiting the coming of other providential moments and other men with great visions of spiritual victory in their eyes. When the gospel conquered us, we became debtors to the dream and the swift obedience of the apostle.

What if he had not obeyed the voice? The

chariots of the Christ, rolling on their way to the millennial glory, too long delayed as it is, might have dragged more heavily and lingered longer in the track of time. The new faith might have gone eastward against the tides of life and march of light; might have subdued the Arab, the Persian, the Hindoo, and the Chinaman, and we to-day be receiving the truth of Jesus at the hands of Oriental teachers. But, just because he obeyed, that silent East, where the day is born, invites us to follow the path of the vision, which still calls, "Come over and help us."

To-day we stand in Paul's position, with some differences. We have gone so far westward that we again face the east. Christianity, victor at the gates of the sunset, now thunders at the golden doors of dawn. We are still following Columbus on the road to the Indies, and are demonstrating his theorem, if you go west far enough, you will get east. We propose to overtake the morning in the land of its birth. By invention and discovery, man has become ubiquitous. God has made the world smaller for us that we may win it the more easily. We, too, like Paul, are facing decadent faiths, and the breaking up of ancient creeds and customs. The great, stagnant sea of Asiatic conservatism and African savagery is swelled by mighty tides of influ-

ence, and broken into majestic billows of surging life, and over the formless void broods the Spirit of God.

Every opening door is God's call to His Church, and the human cry for help was never louder and more insistent than it is to-day. The world has never known a more critical moment. Not only the political but the moral map of the earth is rapidly changing. All walls are down, and the crust of immemorial custom breaking up.

"Each breeze that sweep the ocean
Brings tidings from afar
Of nations in commotion,
Prepared for Zion's war."

God's call, once whispered in a vision of the night, now is loudly thundered by the voices of the day. "Come over and help us!" How shall we help? Not by the might of militarism or the conquests of commerce, but by the sweet sovereignty of loving service. Whether or not we care for political expansion and Anglo-Saxon imperialism, we must believe in the expansion of Christianity and the universal reign of the imperial Christ. For our noblest triumph in the Orient the gospel is greater than gunboats, Christian schools cheaper than soldiers, and missionaries mightier than armies and

munitions of war. The millions spent in engines of destruction would be a thousand-fold more effective if used to equip the armies of salvation.

We hold a vantage-ground, not only in faith, but in time. We live in a missionary century. The nineteenth century began in skepticism. Men thought the French revolution had swept away the past and introduced a new order. Voltaire had prophesied the utter decay of the Christian faith. God answered with Wesley, Methodism, and the great missionary movement. The Church of Jesus is recovering the enthusiasm of Paul and the first century, and a new Knighthood of the Holy Ghost flings down its challenge before the champions of error and the strongholds of sin.

To help the needy world is to help ourselves. Nothing but a world-wide gospel can save our own city and nation. The Holy Ghost did not allow Paul to stay in Asia. He was turned back from Bithynia. Yet it did not miss the gospel because Paul went west instead of east. A century later, and the famous Epistle of Pliny to Trajan tells the story of the saintly character and simple devotion of the Christians of Bithynia. We can not save the man next us, unless we can bring him a gospel great enough to save a world. There is no salva-

tion from sin that is not salvation from selfishness. No Church can be truly evangelistic unless it is a missionary spirit. To save our own land we must save a lost world.

“God wills it!” So cried the crusaders as they assumed the cross for the rescue of the holy sepulcher. “God wills it!”—this be our cry as we go to conquer; not the grave where the dead Christ lay, but the living world for which He died. Sin, misery, and ignorance are God’s call for help. God wills the salvation of this lost world. Let our nobler chivalry cry out, “God’s will be done!” This holy war is the supreme test of our loyalty to the perfect will of our God and our faith in the coming of the perfect reign of His Son. There is a deep and beautiful lesson in the quaint conceit of Father Tabb:

“A little Boy, of heavenly birth
And far from home to-day,
Comes down to find His ball, the earth,
Which sin had cast away;
O comrades, let us, one and all,
Join in to get him back His ball!”

III.

THE LORD OF LIFE.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me hath eternal life and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself.”—John v, 24-26, R. V.

JESUS claims all authority for Himself on the ground that He is the Lord of life. He has just proved it by healing the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. When challenged as a breaker of the Sabbath He calmly sets aside the statement of the creation narrative, that God rested on the seventh day, by claiming for Himself a Divine authority which supersedes all instituted law. “My Father

worketh hitherto, and I work." God is the eternal Worker. On the seventh day, as on the six, His stars keep on in their spherul march. His rivers dance toward the sea, and His flowers grow and blossom. He is not an absentee landlord, but the Living God, immanent in His work. He is not the fatalist's God who made the universe, set it going with the clockwork of necessary laws, and stands aside and aloof to see it go; but He is still at work in deeds of creative power and redeeming love. He does not watch it sail by with its cargo of souls, but Himself trims the spars and sets the sails. He wears the universe as a flower upon His bosom—a flower which only grows from the warmth of His love, and whose hues are born in His heart. His nature is best expressed, not in mechanical terms of law, nor in logical terms of intellect, but in moral terms of life.

And Jesus has come from God; He is the creative norm, the beginning and the end of things. We can not understand the meaning of things, save as we see it in Him. To Him the Father has given to have life in Himself. Images are multiplied to describe this relation which He bears to God and also to us. "In Him was life." He calls Himself the "Bread of life," the "Water of life," the "Light

of life," the "Way, the Truth, and the Life." "He that hath the Son, hath life."

I. WHAT IS LIFE?

It is primarily a biological term, and is as indefinable as God. We can define mechanical things, but not living things; for life has a fullness that goes beyond speech. The swelling seed and bursting bud never quite give up their secret. They are but surface ripples upon an ocean of meaning which sweeps to the throne of the Eternal. All our definitions leave out the very something which is the soul of the matter. We can not define life; we can only note some of its characteristics.

1. *Life involves close correspondence with a fitting environment.*

There is a biological definition which has become very famous, partly through the pedantry of its language and partly by its acuteness. "Life is the definite combination of heterogeneous changes, both simultaneous and successive, in correspondence with external coexistences and sequences." So says Mr. Herbert Spencer, and he is very skillful, if not exhaustive. He notes at least one most important phenomenon of life, its continuous adaption to, and

dependence upon, its environment. This is a necessity to every living organism. You can place a bit of inorganic matter, such as a stone, almost anywhere, and it will at once establish perfect relations with its surroundings. It is not so with living things. They demand a fitting environment for their birth and growth. The crystal can exist anywhere, but the seed needs the soil, air, and sunlight for its well-being; if these are wanting, it must die; if they are unsuitable, it will degenerate. The grain of sand holds to all other particles of matter only by the invisible fingers of force; the living cell lays tribute upon them and transforms them into its own likeness and image.

2. Life has more than physical meanings.

It has a vast range, from the sea-ooze up to man. Whatever may be its validity, there is something sublime in the biological theory of evolution in its Theistic form, which sees a continuous chain from dust to Deity, blossoming out into saints and angels on the way. As life ascends, it grows constantly more complex, and requires a richer environment for its sustenance. Out yonder in the meadow is a great boulder, dropped there by an iceberg of the primeval ocean. It feeds not on the field, and by

itself will neither grow nor waste. But nature has clothed it with gray lichens, to whom the barren rock and the dews of heaven give food enough for their feeble life. Around the rock in the rich soil thrive the sweet grasses and the crimson clover, demanding and receiving more from nature than the lichens or the boulder on which they grow. Moving lazily through the pasture are the mild-eyed cattle, who must wander widely for forage, and who add a life of sensuous delight to the dull, unconscious nutrition of the plant. The boy who drives home the cows at eventide has a wealth of living which includes and goes beyond them all. He can find a joy in the gray and orange tinting of the rocks and the purple shades of twilight, and to the animal's life of sensation adds the larger life of thought and moral feeling. Each has life, but how different in its fullness! Each must feed more widely than the forms beneath it.

So may human beings have less or more of life. Some souls merely vegetate; others pass but little beyond animal experiences and enjoyments. How vastly various the surroundings demanded by different natures! The man of culture and refinement could not endure the sordid home of the boor, while, on the other hand, many a man who might surround

himself with art, books, beauty, and luxury, has preferred to make for himself a dismal den in the midst of it all that answered to his coarser need. All life points upward to that higher life which is love—love which outranks all worlds and all values. Love can put more meaning in a look than heaven can crowd into all its stars. Men can weigh suns and measure the vast spaces of earth and sky, but love can not be measured or weighed. This life can not find satisfaction save in God. He only who “placed eternity in the heart” of man can answer the whole hunger of the human heart.

“What means the voice of Life? She answers, ‘Love!’
For love is life, and they who do not love
Are not alive. But every soul that loves
Lives in the heart of God and hears Him speak.”

3. *Life is a conquering energy.*

It is very easy to believe in the triumph of death. The grave lies in the path of every living thing. Once in the British Museum I stood by the glass case that holds the five feet of dust supposed to be the mummy of Cleopatra. How strange the thought that in that heap of rags is folded the loveless ashes of a fierce fire of passion that once set the world aflame with war. Death rules among all the worlds;

to the eye of sense, he is the mightiest of monarchs. In his royal treasury he has the crowns and scepters of the kings of earth. Death is the very masterpiece of evil. And so life hates death; all the horror of the world is there.

“Who telleth the tale of unspeaking death,
Who lifteth the curtain of what is to come?
Who painteth the shadows that flit beneath
The wide winding shades of the peopled tomb?
Or uniteth the hope of what shall be
With the tears and love of that which we see?”

Men have talked about the beauty of death, but all its beauty ends in decay. Death is discord and misery; life is harmony and happiness. All life is a glad thing, flaming in the flower, exulting in the bird's song, beating its wild music of passion in the loving heart, tasting with rapture the varied delights of sense and soul. Well does Browning speak of the “wild joys of living:”

“How good is man's life, the mere living! How fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!”

As life hates death, so is it gaining on death, and shall conquer death. In the world of nature the kingdom of life is a widening dominion and death has no assured victory. Since the first living germ

appeared upon the earth, vitality has been covering its bare skeleton of rock and sand with a robe of living beauty. By multiplying seeds, the meadows widen, the forests grow, and the race of man increases to overrun and subdue the earth.

II. WHAT IS ETERNAL LIFE?

The phrase is almost peculiar to the fourth Gospel and the writings of John, although the idea is Pauline as well. It is a translation into the terms of universal speech of the Jewish term, "Kingdom of God." To say that one is born again, that he has eternal life, is one with the statement of the Synoptic Gospels that he belongs to the kingdom of heaven. Life is the larger term. Mankind may some day develop so far politically that they may lose the idea of kingship; they can never lose the idea of life. As we speak of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, so may we speak of the kingdom of God. Its analogies are not political, but biological.

I. *It is a spiritual quality of being.*

What do men call life? The restless rush, the wild fury of passion, the feverish gayety of sensuous enjoyment,—this is what they call "seeing life."

But there is another and a higher meaning possible. "The life is more than meat." Eternal life is life that transcends the visible and perishing, and that, piercing the unseen, is lifted above earthly and temporal conditions. It is fellowship with the Infinite One. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." It is not knowing God in any intellectual sense; that would only give us a hopeless ideal. One might as well say, "Be infinite like heaven, and bright like the stars." To know Jesus by faith is to enter a life actually lived, and yet one which transcends all earthliness; it is an eternal life. It is found at its highest in sacrifice. The patriot, parent, and lover, all have known it. In that one transcendent moment, when self was lost in the passion of a great devotion and self-surrender, the soul lived a life higher than all beating pulses or gladder sensation. Life was found in its loss.

2. *It is not a quantitative notion.*

It is not to be expressed in measures of space or time. It is the quality and not the amount of being that is significant. It does not primarily mean endless life. We have too often allowed those great and awful symbols, "fire and brimstone," "pearls and

gold," to displace the deeper spiritual facts of eternal life and death. Eternal things are dateless and spaceless things; time and extension have nothing to do with them. He who is in Christ does not so much go to heaven as live there already. We may be now in the heavenly places; the risen life is "hid with Christ in God." We are related to the eternal timeless things, such as love, purity, holiness, beauty, and truth. It is not more time that we need, but more life. More days of the same poor earthly kind would be but misery. Mere immortality in the sense of duration would be a doubtful good. We need not a longer but a larger life.

"'T is life of which our nerves are scant,
'T is life, not death, for which we pant;
More life, and fuller, that we want."

3. *This life may be a present possession.*

Note the present tenses of the text and all its related passages. Here, and now, we may possess the life eternal. We do not have to die to win it; it does not lie beyond that terror-haunted chasm we call death. We, dwellers among earthly things, enter by faith the eternal order. Just as a tidal river is visited twice daily by the swelling of the ocean,

so these world-inclosed lives of ours can feel the pulse of the eternal sea.

“Standing on tiptoe ever since my youth,
Striving to grasp the future just above,
I hold at length the only future—Truth;
And Truth is Love.

I feel as one who, being awhile confined,
Sees drop to dust about him all his bars;
The clay grows less, and leaving it, the mind
Dwells with the stars.”

The spiritual significance of Dante’s “Divine Comedy” lies largely in the fact that he pictures heaven and hell not so much as future as present states of being. Many of those whom he sees in his vision are still living on earth. For example, he says in terrible words of Branca d’Oria, whom he places in the lowest circle of hell, “He still eats and drinks and wears clothes!” Even the pessimist Omar Khayyam has enough spiritual insight to say:

“I sent my soul into the invisible
Some letters of that after-life to spell;
And by and by, my soul returned to me
And answered, ‘I myself am heaven and hell.’”

Not hereafter, but now, may the soul touch the point of eternal peace, or feel the everlasting unrest. A lady attended by a slave-girl, while on board an

English ship, said to the captain, "If I should take this girl to England, she would be free." And he replied, "She is free now, for England is wherever that flag floats." Not in some future world of glory, but wherever the banner of the cross floats, souls who come under its folds by faith are free citizens of the heavenly kingdom and possessors of its eternal life.

III. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF THE ETERNAL LIFE?

Life seems everywhere to be an exotic. Thus far the evidence of careful experiment is against spontaneous generation. "All life is from the germ," is a fundamental maxim both of biology and theology. Chemistry may imitate the products of life, and by synthesis produce compounds identical with organic substances, but it can not produce vital phenomena. So may moral culture create conduct quite similar to the works of grace, but they are "dead works," not implying any spiritual life. Life is always from above, in plant, animal, man, or in the child of God.

1. *That which gives life must have life in itself.*

No crystal is the child of another crystal. The diamond, whose heart the passionate lightning has kissed, has only a sterile and solitary beauty; but the

ugliest brown seed which holds a living germ could in time fill a world with flowers and fruit. A watch may seem more wonderful than a reptile; but however torpid and low in type the latter may be, it has, what no most skillful mechanism can have, the power of self-renewal and reproduction. The feeblest Christian in whom faith has kindled a spark of the Divine life is loftier in the scale of spiritual being than the most correct moralist. The least in the kingdom is greater than the noblest child of Law. Only God can give eternal life, for only He has it as an original quality of nature. Its secret fountain is in Him, a spring which lavishes itself in all the mighty streams of being. The Eternal Workman is forever renewing the face of the world.

2. This eternal life is in the Son.

“For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself.” “It hath pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness dwell.” Christ is the only bridge between eternity and time. He is the channel through which the Divine love utters its fullness. His is “the power of an endless life.” Death had no place in Him nor power over Him. He is as timeless and dateless as love and truth. We can not think of Him as dead; He could not be held down by any

stone of earth. We can not look for Him in the grave; that would indeed be to "seek the living among the dead." The grave is empty, but the throne is full. In Him the reign of death is ended; He is the "Resurrection and the Life."

Jesus is the Life, and He gives Himself. It is not His example, beautiful and perfect as it is, that saves us. It would be mockery to send an athlete to a hospital just to furnish the sufferers with a model of what perfect health might be. He is more than pattern; He is power. He is more than the perfect example; He is the atoning sacrifice. He saves us, not by His possession of the fullness of eternal life, but by imparting it to dead souls. "The life I live in the flesh, I live by faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

IV. WHAT ARE THE RESULTS OF LIFE?

We know life best by its products, its flowers and fruits. It is always mightier than mechanical forces. The seed lays its tribute on earth and air, and compels matter and force to obey it. Gravitation says to the acorn, "Keep down;" but the living germ defies the force that sways the planets, moves the rocks in its rooting, and lifts its palace of green into the upper air. So the new birth puts the world

under tribute; it overcomes the resistless gravitation that drags us to earth. "Whatsoever is born of God hath overcome the world."

1. *It annuls spiritual death.*

The believer in Jesus has "passed out of death into life." Not in the cemetery alone are the dead; a living human body may be the coffin of a dead soul. Terrible stories have been told of men who were buried alive. But it is not less terrible to be buried intellectually, to be submerged in conditions that suppress the noblest possibilities; it is more awful still to be morally buried, and to have the God-life in us choked and covered with inherited tendencies, acquired vices, and evil habits. The natural man is dead to the calls and claims of the spiritual life. He is like a ruined and deserted temple:

"The bat and owl inhabit there,
The snake lies on the altar stone;
The sacred vessels smolder near,
The image of the God is gone."

Regeneration is a true resurrection. Conversion leads to a new creation. It is no patchwork of repair, but a renewal. It is not written, "You hath He reformed," but "You hath He quickened." Nor is it culture that we need; that only makes of man a

handsomer corpse. Death calls not for instruction, but deliverance. We need not to be taught again, but to be "born again." For flying we must have not a fatter caterpillar feeding on its cabbage-leaf, but a brilliant butterfly among the burning roses. Nor is it that correctness of outward conduct, which is sometimes called morality, which is implied in the new life. That is the cold-storage, embalmed-beef idea, applied to character. It preserves from spoiling, but it is the fixity of death. No formalism can simulate life; no orthodoxy can be a substitute for it.

"They talk of morals, O Thou bleeding Lamb!
The true morality is love of Thee."

It is not like a painted Easter-egg, inert and dead, but new as is the golden sunlight and pleasant air to the bird that has just broken the shell.

To die with Christ is the death of death in us. Faith identifies the believer with the object of faith. This is the Pauline and Johannine doctrine of the mystical union and fellowship with Christ. The believer is crucified with Christ; it is our dead past that dies. The old self has had its day; surrender lays it in its shroud; it is gone forever, and Jesus' blood flows between us and our dead selves. Death

can only touch dying things. Life displaces death, as the tender green of April crowds away the dead foliage of last year. Where are the dead leaves? Who thinks or cares about them? They rot beneath your feet; they are swept away by the fresh spring breezes. Children of the resurrection, we "have passed out of death into life."

2. It implies perpetual renewal.

The present tenses of the blessed life are continuous. We live, and continue to live, by union with the Everlasting One. Living things have the potency of perpetual change and growth. The dead rock never changes nor increases; but the lichen that covers it, the eagle that builds her nest upon it, or the man who blasts it to discover its seams of gold—they live and grow. The eternal life is marked by newness; it is all aglow with vivacious activity. "Walk in newness of life," says St. Paul. We have had quite enough of dead things. We will not haunt the tombs of its past, nor dwell in its graves. We are done with all business, all pleasures, all books and art that are touched with the taint of the charnel-house. Life seeks the light; its trend is upward. As the seed climbs to "find a soul in grass and flowers," so the eternal life is forever

seeking higher things as it follows the path of the ascended Lord.

3. *It means new life for the world.*

Engineers have dreamed of flooding Sahara by a canal, and so to bring new life into North Central Africa. Such a channel is the person of our Lord, out of the life of God into the barren and waste life of man. He came into a dying world. Europe was slowly sinking into Asiatic stagnation. All the splendors of Roman power, Greek culture, and Hebrew worship were the funeral trappings of a dying race. Rome, Athens, and Jerusalem were but mighty monuments on the tomb of humanity. The gospel of the resurrection brought new life to decaying society. Christianity emancipated the slave, elevated womanhood, protected childhood, converted the fierce tribes of the North, built a new world out of the broken fragments of Roman might, saved learning, baptized and recreated art, inspired music—in short, put a beating heart under the skeleton ribs of a dead world.

There is an oft-told story of the relief of Lucknow which may illustrate our theme. Within the besieged city the English, with their women and children, were starving and dying. Investing them

were the savage hosts of the fiendish Nana Sahib, more cruel than the tigers that lurked in the surrounding jungles. It was the hour of utter desperation, when suddenly Jessie Brown, the corporal's wife, put her hand to her ear and cried: "Dinna ye hear it? The pipes of Havelock! The Campbells are coming!" For a long time none else could hear, and all thought her deluded, when at last, sure enough, there burst on their ears the shrill cry of the bagpipes, and soon the kilted Highland soldiery, under Havelock and Outram, entered and rescued the fated city from worse than death. So was the world beleaguered and dying. Old prophets, bending their ears to the earth, heard the coming music of deliverance, until at last angel choristers sang it out in the midnight of the world's woe, and early in the morning of the earth's fairest day the Great Deliverer burst the gates of our bondage, and led the way to life. It was a flash of light flaming into the failing faith of mankind and into the dark kingdoms of the dead.

Forty days ago the sun left the winter solstice, and in forty days more shall touch the vernal equinox. Yet to-day, in spite of seven weeks of growing light, the world is wrapped in winter. But no one doubts the triumph of the sun, and that risen

life shall march upward from the South, pressing back the snowbanks and marking its footsteps with the violet and the rose. Are we ever disturbed because our dead world shows so little of the effect of nineteen centuries of His shining? The summer-time of history is yet to come, and no believing soul doubts His final victory.

Resurrection is the secret of Pentecost. Whenever the world goes back to Jesus, its failing strength is renewed. All revival is but fresh contact with the conquering and never-failing life of the everlasting Son of God.

4. *It secures personal immortality.*

The present possession of eternal life is the Spirit's victory over physical death. Jesus has conquered the grave for the believer. Death has become a negligible quantity in view of the life in God. We all have known souls of such high spiritual quality that we could no more think of them as dead than of Jesus. Over such "death hath no more power." The last day shall ratify the verdict of to-day. If we could travel as fast as the sun, we would never know night. The man who hath eternal life of faith in Jesus Christ sails with the sun, and so outrides the darkness; his bark at sunset sinks to another sea and an endless day.

"The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of man." He stands among the graves, and the dust quivers at His call. He who has slain sin and selfishness shall slay the last enemy also. Then will we chant the sublimest strain of the great Te Deum: "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers."

Yet it is a poor blessedness that transfers all its hopes to that scene of future glory. Here and now, amid the wrecks of death, let us dare to sing the undying songs of a life transcending all our mortal years. Let us live in the heavenly places, rejoicing in every mortal pang as the dropping of the grave-clothes of a dying world. The resurrection light shines upon our very sorrows, and shows them to be heavenly harbingers of deathless glory. Ours may be the budding, blossoming life whose fair fruitage awaits the resurrection of the just.

"I long to see the hallowed earth
In new creation rise;
To find the germs of Eden hid
Where its fallen beauty lies;
To feel the springtide of a soul,
By one deep love set free,
Made meet to lay aside her dust,
And be at home with Thee."

“The hour is coming, and now is.” This moment is big with destiny; it throbs with resurrection power. O souls, dead in passion, appetite, and selfishness, hear ye the voice of the Son of God! With this gasp of your mortal breath you may inhale the air of the immortal life. Believe, and thou shalt live!

IV.

LOVE, THE INTERPRETER OF GOD.

"He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is Love."—1 John iv, 8.

It is vastly easier to affirm the negative of a proposition than to prove its affirmative. There are no intellectual occupations on which a man can enter with so small a capital, either of learning or logic, as skepticism and denial. It is faith, and not doubt, which calls for strenuous thinking and intellectual effort.

Perhaps in the sense of formal proof we never can demonstrate the existence of God. He who is the sum and end of all thinking can not be made subject to the laws of thought. Logical proof is simply a process by which we assign a term to its proper class. The subject of the conclusion of a syllogism must always be a minor term. God can never be made a minor term; He can not be included in any notion larger than Himself. In the

sense of deductive logic, you can not prove His existence. He who is the condition of all reasoning can not be reached by our reason. So far as we have a rational faith in God, it is reached by painstaking and careful induction. Our intellect requires a God as a solution of the deepest problems of thought and life. It is hard to prove God, and very easy to deny Him.

But positive proof has this on its side, that no negative can ever be proved. To assert conclusively that there is no God, one would need to possess some of the Divine attributes. The denier would have to be omnipresent and have explored all the depths of space; he would have to be omniscient, and have taken all knowledge for his province, before he dare dogmatically exclude God from human thought. There may be some rational basis for agnosticism; there is certainly none for atheism.

The difficulty with our knowledge of God arises from the subject-matter. Spiritual things must be spiritually discerned. We can not apply the tests of quantitative science to moral and spiritual phenomena. We are quite aware that all our psychic states are accompanied by a parallel series of physical facts. When we think, feel, or act, it is accompanied by nervous reactions and the formation and breaking

up of nerve-cells. Yet we always must draw a sharp line between any spiritual experience and the physical phenomena which accompany it. Because sorrow produces tears, sorrow is not therefore salt water.

Tears, indeed, furnish a very good illustration. It is not hard to explain them on their physical side. The chemist will tell you that they are composed of chloride of sodium, water and mucus; the physiologist will explain how they are secreted from the arterial blood, collected in lachrymal glands, and their function in washing the eyeball. Yet this knowledge, valuable as it is, is neither exhaustive nor very penetrating. The poet speaks a profounder message when he sings in sadly sweet strains:

“Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean;
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise from the heart and gather to the eyes,
In looking o’er the happy autumn fields,
And dreaming of the days that are no more.”

Yet none of these, man of science nor poet, has interpreted the crystal sphere that glitters on the widow’s cheek, or the symbolized sorrow that pours from the eyes of the penitent sinner. That can never be understood,

“Save through the sweet philosophy
And loving wisdom of the heart.”

So it is with our knowledge of God. The revelation of His being and character can not come to the earthly, but to the spiritual side of our nature. The method of the Divine science is different from that of the earthly sciences. He whose nature is Spirit, and whose character is Love, can only be discovered by spiritual vision and known by the loving heart.

I. KNOWLEDGE IS INCOMPLETE WITHOUT FEELING.

Nothing is more futile than knowledge in the mere sense of learning. A great apostle says, "Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up." That is, mere knowledge makes an empty balloon of a man, but loves makes him into a living temple.

1. Love is necessary to the full knowledge of even earthly things.

A man of merely intellectual temperament may compass the dry bones of learning, he may collect the facts of a science, master the grammar of a language, or memorize a poem, and yet not realize what is the heart and soul of it all. Some touch of emotion or kindling of imagination are required to full knowledge.

Here is one who says, "I will be a statesman,"

and so he enters upon the study of statecraft. He masters the social and political history of the race, traces the rise and fall of empires and civilizations, knows all about the charters and treaties which are the landmarks of legislation, equips himself in economics and sociology. It is well; but all this, and as much more, will not make him a statesman. When some crisis comes in the affairs of men and nations, some cause that touches the sensitive nerves of human feelings and reaches the red-ripe of the human heart, unless he is capable of broad, sympathetic, and strongly passionate feeling, he will fail. For he that loveth not, knoweth not statesmanship.

Another would be a lawyer; he therefore studies the civil and common laws, the statutes of state and nation, the practice of tribunals of justice, and the precedents of courts. But in that hour, when his voice pleads for justice for the weak against the lawless spoiler, or in behalf of life itself, he will not be half a lawyer unless his heart shall kindle his brain. He that loveth not, knoweth not law.

Still another would be a physician. He studies the human frame "fearfully and wonderfully made," its anatomy and physiology; he investigates disease, its causes, symptoms, and effects; he masters the *materia medica* and the whole science of therapeutics

so far as known. Yet you have known, as I once discovered, in those weary days when you lay at death's door, than the man and his strong, manly sympathy was more than all his medicine. He that loveth not, knoweth not medicine.

Many a man accounted learned is really ignorant of that it most behooves him to know. One of the meanest things ever done by a good man was the act of Milton, who taught his daughters to pronounce, not understand, Greek, that they might read to him in his blindness. And so they read hour after hour, to his delight, barbarous words that carried no meaning to their minds. Just like them is the undevout student of science or philosophy. He never masters more than the outside of truth. He alone truly knows the world to whom it is a spoken word that carries the meaning of infinite spirit. He that loveth not, knoweth not science.

2. *Full knowledge demands all the powers of the soul.*

Truth is many-sided, and needs to be approached from the standpoint of every faculty of the soul. To be a musician, there is needed more than knowledge of acoustics, acquaintance with musical theory and technical mastery of voice or instrument. Profound

feelings to the point of passion are essential to make the truly great musician.

It is this emotional part of training which is most neglected in modern education. Mind is cultivated at the expense of the soul, the head at the expense of the heart. Why are men ashamed of acting upon emotional impulse? If the feeling is a genuine and noble one, why not? It may err, but probably not more often than judgment. It is quite as important to learn to feel as to think, to love as to remember, to adore as well as to reason. All our knowledge without this is partial and misleading.

3. *This is especially true of the knowledge of God.*

That was a fine maxim of Neander, "The heart makes the theologian." Only through our affections can we find a road into the great mystery of infinite love. Pascal has thus beautifully stated it in one of the profoundest of his "Thoughts:"

"It has pleased God that Divine virtues should not enter the heart through the understanding, but the understanding through the heart. For human things must be known to be loved, but Divine things must be loved to be known."

II. THE GOD OF THE INTELLECT.

The intellect can not be wholly excluded from our religious life. It has its share in our knowledge of God. While none of the arguments for the being of God are beyond logical criticism, not one of them is without a large measure of validity. The understanding may not disclose to us the nature of God, but it does assure us of the fact of His existence. Let us look at some of these proofs.

1. *The proof from universal consent.*

Everywhere among men exists this conviction of the being of Deity, a belief which is founded in our own personality; the voice of the Infinite within. Man who is himself a cause is compelled to place back of all the energy he sees an unconditioned will. Just because the only motions whose origin he knows begin in his personal will, he is unable to see motion anywhere without ascribing it to will. This belief in the personality of force is well-nigh universal, reaching from the superstitions of fetichism to the loftiest speculations of philosophy. Creation is the will, and the universe the act of God. Wherever light streams it is the sweep of His garment; all the fiery worlds were kindled by His touch. Motion is the thrust of His hand, and gravitation the weight of His finger.

Even should the speculations of some sociologists be confirmed, and we should discover primitive races destitute of the idea of God, it would not invalidate the argument. There is a subtle reticence of savage peoples about their religious beliefs which will account for the alleged silence in some tribes. If there are lowest men without the notion of Deity, that would only prove that the agnostic and the atheist have ended in the degradation and ignorance with which the race began. The truth would remain that normal man—man at his best, the humanity that has shaped arts and sciences, written literatures, and created civilizations—has always and everywhere seen intelligence and will moving behind the shows of nature, and believed that the Power behind phenomena is personal.

2. The proof from design in nature.

There is immanent purpose in nature. There is thought in things which testifies to a thinker behind them. When you read a great poem like the "Paradise Lost" of Milton, following its superb imagery and listening to the majestic music of its verse, no apostle of chance could convince you that an explosion in a type foundry somewhere threw letters and words into the ordered beauty of thought and meter.

When you listen to a wonderful tone-poem, like one of Beethoven's symphonies, played by a well-trained orchestra, and your soul sets out upon

"The tides of music's golden sea
Setting toward eternity,"

no sophisticated skeptic could persuade you that a cyclonic battle of the winds in the void of air or ocean sang its wild notes into these matchless melodies and heavenly harmonies. When you gaze on a poem in stone like St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome, where Michael Angelo hung the Pantheon in air in the glorious dome that dominates the Eternal City, could any one convince you that arches, pillars, carvings, statuary, and all that classic calm of Greek line touched with Renaissance feeling, were flung into their places by an earthquake in a stone-quarry and lumber-yard?

Even so, no chance spelled out God's poem of creation, written in letters of stars above and of flowers beneath; no chance sounds forth His Divine symphony when the fingers of the wind touch the lyre of the forest, and the ocean beats out his organ music on the rocky keyboard of the shore, keeping time to the martial music of the thunder; no chance built His temple, tree-pillared, meadow-carpeted, and mountain-buttressed, whose sky dome is forever il-

lumined with the burning beauty of God's holy lights, There is a Divine Poet in whose imagining all beauty was born, a Divine Musician whose are the harmonies of singing spheres and sounding seas, a Divine Architect who laid the foundations of heaven and earth, and reared its walls in strength and its spires and pinnacles in glory. To think otherwise is to bring chaos into our thought and to do violence to the human understanding.

3. *The proof from conscience.*

Within us we carry a testimony to the existence of a moral government, a higher power to which we are responsible. It is that "other one," of whom Plato speaks whose friendship we must have to be at peace. The shadow of the judgment throne falls across the soul; it is secretly swayed by an unseen scepter. In the gladness of its approval, and in the gloom of its remorse, we see the smile and feel the frown of the Unseen Ruler. He who says "ought" has confessed God.

4. *The proof from Providence.*

Not in nature only, but in human history, is a Divine order. The stately stepplings of a sovereign will and purpose can be seen all along the paths of time.

III. THE GOD OF THE HEART.

Our greatest need is not to know that there is a God, but what kind of a God He is. Many thinkers, like John Stuart Mill, have felt the force of the argument from design, and yet have seen in it no proof of the benevolence of the power that made the world. We want to know Him in the deeper sense of personal acquaintance. Our heart and flesh cries out for the Living God. He must be to us more than a word in the dictionary, more than a clause in the creed, more than an answer in the catechism or a proposition in theology. The knowledge *that* He is can never fill the soul; we long for a personal acquaintance which shall assure us as to *what* He is.

1. *The natural man does not truly know God.*

He is not revealed to the senses. "No man hath seen God at any time." We can not see gravitation or hear light drop; no more can sense perception discover God. Lalande, the only atheistic astronomer of whom I ever heard, once said, "I have swept space with my telescope, and have not found God." He evidently thought God to be an optical

object, to be beheld by the eye and magnified by lenses. But God can not be found that way.

God is not revealed to analysis. When genius can be drawn out on a pair of forceps, or character shown on the end of a probe, when the dissecting scalpel can lay bare the soul, then can physical experiment find God. All in vain do we look for Him in the bottom of a crucible or in the smoking fumes of the chemical laboratory; all in vain shall we seek Him in the crimson dripping caves of physiology.

God is not revealed to reason. Merely intellectual activity can not compass Him. A God who rested only on reason would be as worthless as a bloodless ghost. This is the true Christian agnosticism which cries out with Zophar: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is higher than heaven, what canst thou do? It is deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea."

To discover God, the right instrument must be used. For little things we use the microscope, for distant things the telescope, to untwine the rays of light the spectroscope. But the only instrument

that can find God is the loving heart. It is better than the inquiring intellect or the craving imagination.

“The mind has a thousand eyes,
The heart but one;
But the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.”

2. Life is more than logic; it is love.

It is not from the head but the heart that flow the supreme issues of life. Feeling is a more significant fact in human nature than thought. Men thought one thing yesterday, and they will think another thing to-morrow; the philosophies of mankind change with the changing generations. But man remains the same; he still loves and hates, his passionate heart has the same eternal need of loving as it had in the childhood of the world. Schopenhauer said, “All nations have not had philosophers, but they have all had mothers.” The greatest things in our life refuse to be rationalized. We can not and will not syllogize its sweetest and dearest experiences. Mother, wife, and child are the three great creeds which all true men hold without argument and defend without apologetics. Life is always whole and entire, while science is forever an imperfect thing. It is written that “we know in

part," but not that we love in part. "The heart has reasons of its own of which the reason knows nothing at all." And so Tennyson sings:

"If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice, 'Believe no more,'
And heard an everbreaking shore
That tumbled in a godless deep,

A warmth within my breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And, like a man in wrath, the heart
Stood up and answered, 'I have felt.'"

3. *God is revealed to love.*

God is love, and love is something that resists definition. Here is a delicious dictionary attempt: "A feeling of strong attachment induced by that which delights or commands admiration." The child that hangs for kisses on its mother's lips knows more than all that platitudinous pedantry. The undefinable, unprovable God reveals Himself in a way which defies definition, and can do without it, and which "passeth knowledge."

The character of God, created by His own eternal choice, is love. The sweetest passions of the human heart, multiplied by infinity, and directed by a will of infinite power,—such is the God of the Bible, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And because

He is love, the road to the knowledge of Him is through the moral affections. Only the man with music in his soul can appreciate a symphony of Bach or Mozart; only an artistic temperament can enjoy a painting of Raphael or a carving of Praxiteles; and even so, only the loving heart can know God, for God is Love.

4. *The God of the Bible is not the God of a system, but of life.*

We can not imprison God in the forms of human speech. Perhaps the most successful attempt is the well-known definition of the Shorter Catechism: "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth."

There is a very good, though possibly apocryphal, story told concerning this definition. The committee appointed by the Westminster Assembly to frame the Catechism struggled hour after hour over the second question, "What is God?" At last, in utter perplexity of mind, the chairman said to the youngest member of the committee, "Dr. Gillespie, lead us in prayer." And he prayed thus, "O God, Thou Spirit, infinite, unchangeable, and eternal in Thy being," and so on to the end; when the chairman

said, "That will do, we have it!" Certainly there was never a more successful attempt made to put the Infinite One into the box of a definition.

Yet the definition is harder than the thing defined. What meaning does your mind give to such words as "Spirit," "Infinite," and all the rest? It is only when we say "God is Love" that He comes out of the infinite depths and finds a sure dwelling-place in our hearts. For love defines Him in terms of life, and not of thought.

5. *All love is His interpreter.*

"Love is of God, and He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." All true love is a direct ray from His being, which, followed, will lead to Him. The love that croons at the cradle is one with that love whose impulse moves the stars. Love of father, mother, brother, and sister; sweet family love, learned within the sacred walls of the home; love of friends, clasping hands in loyal amity; love of country, giving life itself in patriotic devotion; love of humanity, that broad philanthropy that takes in all human kind,—all, all are steps of a ladder by which we ascend to the Divine love which inspired them all. Jesus taught us to say "Our Father," and Paul assures us that every fatherhood in heaven

and earth gets its name from Him. Every worthy earthly love is a flower that has its roots in God. No wonder that Theodore Parker once began a prayer, "Our Mother, who art in heaven." He, Himself, has said: "Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb; yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee." Father and mother of us all, Brother of our humanity, Friend of sinners, Bridegroom and Lover of the soul,—by every tenderest human title of affection He makes Himself known to the heart that loves.

We could not trust in loveless wisdom, even though it were infinite. A fiend might possess it, and it might be only selfish skill and conscienceless cunning. But this comforts, to feel that the boundless skill that made the worlds and rules their destiny is wholly at the service of a love as matchless as is the wisdom.

We could only shudder before the thought of Almighty Power and tremble at its thunders. To dream of an omnipotent demon, who hurls the titanic forces of the universe at the bidding of willful caprice or selfish purpose, is the most awful nightmare that could haunt the heart. But it is rapture to know that boundless Power is at the service of

measureless love, and that there is not an energy in all the universe which is not the willing servant of our Father's love.

"The very God! think, Abib, dost thou think?
That the All-Great were the All-Loving too!
So through the thunder comes a human voice,
'O heart, that I have made, a heart beats here.'"

6. *The intellect gives the form, and the heart the content, of the knowledge of God.*

There is matter for another sermon in that proposition. I can only state it and give a single illustration.

Men have ever been hungrily asking, "Who and what is God?" And in all their honest answers there has been a part of the truth. Men have built their conception of God as one would build a noble temple.

First comes the metaphysician, and we demand: "O philosopher, you have probed the human reason, unraveled the intricacies of thought, and guessed the mysteries of mind; you know very much,—pray tell us what is God?" And the metaphysician answers, "God is unconditional will, seeing His own way, and having the end of His action in Himself alone!" A little dry and juiceless that, but it will do for a plan of our temple. A plan is necessary

to all good building, though it furnishes neither shelter nor warmth.

Next comes the man of science, all-knowing science, and we ask, "O man, wise with your messages from earth, sea, and air; you have probed, analyzed, experimented with all things,—pray what have you found out about God?" And science replies, "God is Law." Not much food in that for a hungry heart; rather the awful voice of stern necessity. Yet our temple must have strong foundations; let us undergird it with the granite of law.

Next comes the Hebrew prophet, the light of a great vision glowing in his eyes, and we cry, "O Jew, you say you have heard God speak and claim possession of His oracles,—tell us what is God?" And the Jew responds, "God is Righteousness," and the voice comes through the flame of a burning mountain and an awful earthquake, accompanied by rolling thunders. How our hearts tremble at the tidings; we would hide our sinful souls from the dread vision of His holiness. Yet in this answer our temple finds mighty walls and the strong thrust of massive buttresses.

Now comes the Greek, with youthful grace in his face and the gifts of culture in his hands; let us ask him, "What is God?" And the Greek an-

swers, "God is Beauty." There is nothing in loveless beauty to cheer my aching heart or cure my sin, yet our temple should be beautiful. Let fair frescoes deck the walls, costly carvings adorn the pillars, fair arches bend above, and graceful spires leap like frozen fountains toward the sky.

Now is our temple finished. Finished? Yes, and no. Its form is there, grand in united strength and beauty, but it is cold and empty. As we walk down the vacant aisles, our hearts freeze in the chill air, and the echo of our footfalls strikes a lonely dread into the spirit. Still we cry out for the living God.

It was in the holy Judean twilight. The beloved disciple was leaning on the bosom of Jesus, hearing the throbbing of the greatest heart that ever beat and broke for men, looking into the tenderest eyes that ever glowed with the light of love, and listening to the gracious lips that spoke the sweetest messages whose music ever blessed mortal ears. There was a hush of sacred silence, and John whispered, "My Master, tell me, who and what is God?" And then the heart beat more warmly, and the eyes looked more tenderly, and the lips spoke more softly, as Jesus said, "My beloved, God is Love." Our temple is empty and lonely no longer; for, at that word,

through the long aisles and up to the vaulted roof bursts the anthem of redemption, and on the altar blazes the Shekinah of the living Presence.

Love finds God; He can not hide Himself from the search of the loving heart. "Love will find out the way,"—such is the moral of one of the sweetest love stories that has come down to us from the Middle Ages. Gilbert à Becket, a citizen of London, was a prisoner in the tent of a noble Saracen in one of the Crusades. While there, love sprang up between the hearts of the fair-haired Saxon and a dark-eyed daughter of the desert. When he was at last released and returned to his home, the lonely maiden pined for her Western lover, and, leaving her home, she followed him. She knew but two English words, "London" and "Gilbert." By repeating the first she found her way to the sea, then into the high-masted ship, and, after awhile, in the streets of the far-off city. Then she began to say "Gilbert," as she passed from street to street. The curious crowd followed her, until one day, Gilbert à Becket, attracted by it and drawing near, found his lost love from the Orient. From that marriage sprang the great family of à Becket. So was He, the heavenly Lover of the soul, with us on a more knightly quest than ever fired a Crusader's heart.

A prisoner in the tents of earth, He won our souls to passionate devotion. And now that He has gone to prepare a place for His Bride, she, speaking the words, "Jesus! Heaven!" shall not fail to find "the King in His beauty and the land which is very far off." Love will find out the way. So the old ballad goes:

"Over the mountains,
And over the waves;
Under the fountains,
And under the caves;
Through floods that are deepest,
O'er rocks that are steepest,
Love will find out the way."

Nothing can stand in the way of love. Having conquered sin and doubt, sorrow and despair, it shall conquer death also. "Many waters can not quench love, neither can the floods drown it. Love is strong as death."

"Sink down, ye separating hills,
Let sin and death remove;
'T is love that drives my chariot wheels,
And death must yield to love."

V.

HARDENING THE HEART.

"And Pharaoh hardened his heart."—Ex. viii, 32.

"And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh."—

Ex. ix, 12.

"PHARAOH hardened his heart;" "The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh,"—is not that a palpable contradiction in terms? It could not have seemed so to the writer, for on any theory of authorship the same pen recorded both statements. In his mind there was certainly some solution of the problem, some reconciliation of the free agency of Pharaoh and the judicial act of Jehovah.

"Pharaoh hardened his heart." We have no difficulty in believing that statement. We have done the like ourselves; we, too, like the stubborn Egyptian king, have waged our losing warfare against the will of our God; we, too, by repeated rebellions, have made our hearts well-nigh callous to His touch.

It is the second text, "The Lord hardened the

heart of Pharaoh," that shocks our sensibilities and puzzles our reason. Can we believe it? One thing is certain, in any real battle between the instincts of human justice and the forms of human language, though the words were found in the most sacred of records, language must go down before that imperial sense of right which the divinest of revelations speaks in the human conscience. If we had to believe that any sovereign act of God arbitrarily excluded any soul from righteous choices, our faith in the whole moral order would be shaken. Then, indeed, "this pillared firmament were rottenness."

Is there necessarily any contradiction? It is worth our notice that no less than three words in the Hebrew original text are rendered "harden" in our English version. It would involve a too pedantic nicety to argue this point at any length; it is sufficient to note that, in the very language used by the recorder of this ancient story of doom, it is implied that there is a difference in character between the human and the Divine act of hardening; that God does not and will not harden a human heart in the same awful sense in which we may and do harden our own hearts against Him. God does not debauch the will of man, or infuse evil passions into his heart. Pharaoh was not the blind agent of

some un pitying and arbitrary fate. We rest secure, on the basis of the very language used, that there is nothing in the narrative which need awaken doubts of the Divine justice or disturb our faith in the moral order of the world.

The case of Pharaoh is simply one picture out of thousands of the eternal struggle between the will of God and that of man. Somewhere, at the parting of the ways, every soul comes to the same crisis, to that valley of decision where, in the mystery of choice, is sown the seed of character. In the narrative of Exodus, God is defeated in the field of the human will, but gloriously triumphant in the issue of the history. For the defeat of God is always and everywhere the most fearful defeat of man.

“For he that shuts out Love, in turn shall be
Shut out by Love, and on her threshold lie
Howling in outer darkness. Not for this
Was common clay ta'en from the common earth,
Molded by God, and tempered with the tears
Of angel, to the perfect shape of man.”

Thus the case of Pharaoh has become typical. His is a shining shame that glows luridly for us across more than thirty centuries. He stands in the like awful doom with others, Esau, Saul, Judas, and millions since, who have broken their lives like waves against the granite strength of righteous law. It

did not happen three millenniums ago. It happened yesterday, here, in our own city; it may be happening in this house of God to-day.

I. MAN MAY HARDEN HIS OWN HEART AGAINST THE WILL OF GOD.

In the context, the hardening is ascribed to Pharaoh again and again. He, himself, was under no delusion as to the point of personal responsibility. He confesses in seeming contrition to the prophet of God, "I have sinned against the Lord your God and you;" and again, "The Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." Indeed, we can determine the exact period when the walls of doom begin to close in upon the stubborn tyrant. It is exactly in the middle of the ten plagues. Five awful warnings have spent their force in vain, and the language is altered. Judicial blindness has set in; and it is now that we begin to meet the phrase, "The Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh." It is simply the common enough case of a self-induced callousness which ends in a blind and reckless infatuation.

1. *We mark for ourselves the limits of the Divine mercy.*

No man is shut out from the grace of God by the act of God. For His mercy has no limit, nor His

justice, nor His love. In the sublime statement of Genesis, "In the image of God made He man," we catch a glimpse of that which is at once the glory and the peril of our nature. Man has been crowned with glory and honor, and given a share in the moral sovereignty of the world.

"Thought, conscience, will,—to make them all thine own,
He tore a pillar from the Eternal Throne;
Made in His image, thou mayest nobly dare
The thorny crown of sovereignty to wear;
Honor thy station, prove thy high estate,—
Thou hast a choice, to choose is to create."

This freedom involves the possibility of sin. Sin is the abuse of freedom, the self-choice of the will. This domain of choice God will not invade. He everywhere and always by His law co-operates with human volition. He shares dominion with His creatures. It is at this cost to Himself that God creates a moral empire; and who shall say that it is not worth the sacrifice? What we choose for ourselves, the justice and the goodness of God will at last choose for us. There is no one of His good gifts that we have not the power to turn into a curse. Fire, water, light, food, and air are blessing or bane according to our act; all were good in the thought of the Heavenly Father. Nature has her Athanasian

Creed not less strict than that of the Church, and she never repeals the damnatory clauses. If anywhere, in grace or nature, a door is shut that leads to good, the hand of man, not that of God, has closed it.

2. The penalty for sin is self-wrought.

Sin is the penalty of sin. The most terrible result of our transgression is in the fact that sin involves more sin. Sin punishes itself. "Of our pleasant sins God makes whips to scourge us." Punishment in the government of God is not a capricious and arbitrary thing, but logical and natural, the inevitable outcome of the sin itself. It is not some measured quantum placed over against each wicked deed. Sin itself is torment, and has an awful fruitage in further evil and deeper woe.

The men of genius who have seen most deeply into the moral problems of life have always discerned this. The circling hells of Dante's *Inferno* are shaped wholly of a spiritual symbolism, in which each offender finds a woe his sin has helped to create—a strange outward picture of the inward crime. Hawthorne's monomaniac who carries the snake in his heart and cries, "It gnaws me!" and his Arthur Dimmesdale, who wears unseen the Scarlet Letter on his breast,—all are symbols of this terrible power

of God's law to execute itself upon the sinner. The same lesson is taught by the weird story of "The Ancient Mariner," who, having slain the albatross, which the sailors thought the harbinger of favorable winds, is condemned to wear the dead bird about his neck in punishment of his crime. How true it is to all human experience! The lustful man shall see all true love blighted and all shapes of beauty defiled to his vile vision; his own passions shall become his torment. The covetous man shall become the slave of his own selfishness, and the passionate the prey of their own untamable desires.

Not out of the judgments of a mighty God, but out of the sinful heart of man, is hell born. Sin makes hell. Its deep foundations are laid in rebellious will; its adamantine walls are built of selfish choices; its flames are the burning, raging passions of men; and the never-dying worm, which forever feeds upon the unconsumed being, is the aching sense of a lost purity, the heart's need of a love which only the God it has rejected can supply. Where sin is, there hell is. If you should take the fairest star that floats on the azure sea above us and fill it with sinners, it would become a hell. If God should robe the sinner in white, put the crown on his head and the harp in his hand, and then place him in the flow-

ery fields of heaven, so long as sin remained in his heart he would be distant by all the infinite diameter of being from the nearest angel. All the power of the eternal God can not take the sinner out of hell while he remains a sinner, for sin makes hell. Our punishment is self-wrought. God save us from ourselves! We carry the seeds of hell within us. Man hardens his own heart.

II. WHAT PART HAS GOD IN HARDENING THE HEART?

We begin to see in what sense it can be affirmed of God that He hardens the heart. Just because this hardening is a necessity of the moral nature of man, it is a law of the moral government of God.

1. *It is involved in the natural and necessary operation of His laws.*

We see this most clearly in the law of habit, on which the formation of character depends. It is a process by which voluntary and free actions gradually become involuntary and necessary. Act is always ripening into state, conduct creates character, and deed develops into destiny. This law lies at the foundation of all education and training. The illustrations are everywhere. Let us note a few.

I can not commonly get thus far in a sermon without some blunder in speech. It is no more possible for me to use "shall" and "will" properly, without thought, than it is for Scotchmen generally. Is it because I do not know the rules of grammar and rhetoric? By no means; it simply is because I learned to talk before the grammar man caught me. Certain tricks of speech have become second nature which no precept can destroy.

Have you ever reflected what a curiously-complicated process is the learning of any difficult art, such as music? To the uninitiated, nothing is more mysterious than a musical score; the lines and spaces, the strange black dots, the elaborate symbolism to represent melody, harmony, and rhythm. Think of the tedious years of training before the artist can readily reproduce it on the keyboard of the piano. How awkward were the first movements, how conscious the processes by which the eye noted the score, and then the fingers patiently felt for the proper keys! But the artist knows no such difficulty. His eyes and muscles have a memory and volition of their own, with which conscious thought and will have nothing to do. The score passes to the eyes, and from the educated finger-tips finds its way to the chords, where it is transformed into

garlands of melody and harmony for the delight of all who hear. Were it not possible to keep consciously willing until, at last, will was lost in habit, no training in art or morals would be possible.

Mr. Huxley gives a fine illustration of this law in one of his "Lay Sermons." A day laborer in London had been, for many years before, a common soldier in the army. The discipline and drill of the camp and field had become of the very fiber of his physical being. One day, while going to his work with his dinner in his hand, a former officer, seeing and recognizing him, called out, "Attention!" At once the man stood at attention, his dinner went into the ditch and his little finger to the seam of his trousers. So has many a man drilled so long in the ranks of sin that at every order of the dark Destroyer he stands obedient, while the treasures of his nature go down into mire and filth.

And this is, in a very profound sense, the act of God—this crystallization of choice into soul tissue and spiritual fiber. His law, which is His will in action, takes up our acts, our thoughts, our feelings, and welds them into that lasting structure we call character. It works towards holiness as truly as toward an evil destiny. There are men in this congregation to whom a dishonorable thought or

act has become so difficult as to be well-nigh impossible. The truth is so instinctive to them that, like the youthful Washington, they "can not tell a lie." There are thousands of women to whom an unchaste thought or act is as remote as from God's whitest angel.

The same law that builds the brazen walls of perdition, rears the high walls of beauty that shut the holy into heaven. "Character," says Novalis, "is organized will."

Such is the sense in which man's sinful choices become themselves a part of the judicial sentence of God, and the hardening of heart wrought by man's willfulness is seen to be secured as by Divine decree.

"Never let man be bold enough to say,
Thus and no farther shall my passion stray;
The first crime passed, compels us on to more,
And guilt proves fate, which was but choice before."

Say, "I will not," often enough to God, and it will become, "I can not."

2. *This process is gracious as well as judicial.*

Men are hardened by the very influences meant to convince and save them. It is God's gifts that become our doom. Abused mercy turns into wrath.

God was as willing to spare Egypt as to deliver Israel. By many and varied influences, by sign and miracle, by prophetic warning and entreaty, by doom following upon doom like successive crashes of thunder, by the suffering of His people, God sought to persuade the willful king. Calamity is often the voice of God that warns against more deadly peril. Pain is a sentinel that stands like an angel with the drawn sword, guarding, not the way to life, but to death. Law is highest love. An apostle of the New Testament links in one breath "the goodness and the severity of God." Henrik Ibsen puts these great words into the mouth of his hero Brand:

"If day by day passes in drowsy peace, at a walking pace, like a funeral, then a man may well think that he is struck out of the Lord's book. But to you He has shown more favor; He has shed horror into your blood; He has scourged you with a whip at the time of need; what He gave, at a dear price He has taken again. A living people sucks sorrow and strength out of affliction."

God afflicts in mercy. He is honest with our souls at the expense of our bodies. He will not leave us to the deeper misery of forgetting Him, although ten plagues are needed to remind us. The

justice of God must not be separated from His mercy. Popular sentimentalism is too prone to mistake mercy for moral weakness and easy good nature. To believe in a love not rooted in righteousness is to believe in a love not strong enough to save. The love that will not punish can not redeem. For mercy is a robust and stalwart thing, else we could not trust it. Behind every judgment beats the heart of the Infinite tenderness. The sun which clothes one tree withers and blasts another. The heat that melts the wax hardens the clay. Mercy,—she too, like Justice, stands with the poised scales and the drawn sword. To save the sheep, she will slay the wolves; she will stamp out the serpents about her children's cradle.

3. *This interaction of human will and the Divine law in the process of hardening illustrates and vindicates the Sovereignty of God.*

Pharaoh had his way, but so God was all the more triumphant. All his delays and denials, all his parleyings and postponements, only made the victory of Jehovah and His people more splendid. That night of the Exodus stood forever marked in Hebrew history as the true birth-hour of the nation.

"With a high hand and a stretched-out arm," Jehovah went before them in the flame and behind them in the cloud, while under the full passover moon, and through the flying foam flung from the lips of the east wind, Israel marched dry-shod, leaving, as the cleft waves closed in, the hosts of Egypt to be tossed in the trough of the sea and be rolled pale corpses on either shore, while on the farther banks of a great deliverance the redeemed bondmen chant their psalm in triumph:

"Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea;
Jehovah hath triumphed, His people are free."

All human willfulness is but an added note of emphasis to the will of God. And this is the word of the Lord unto Pharaoh, and to all stout-hearted rebels against His law: "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared through all the earth." Centuries later the most penetrating spiritual insight that ever saw into the soul of Hebrew history, thinking of this very case, exclaimed:

"What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-

suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction; and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory?"

There is in this none of the capricious arbitrariness of the Pagan proverb, "Whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad." The greater fact is, that in the sphere of human life and history men supply the conditions and materials with which Divine providence works. God is to us what we are to God. His absolute sovereignty takes up all human choices and deeds into the warp and woof of His eternal purpose. The splendid web of His perfect rule is woven of the mingled threads of good and evil furnished by earthly lives. God will rule the world in spite of—yes, and by means of—disobedience and sin. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him." Our self-will can not dethrone the eternal King. A Swedish proverb says, "He that will not be ruled by the rudder must be ruled by the rocks."

You have heard some true master improvising upon the grand organ. At first he began with his theme, a beautiful melody, rendered very simply with rich, full harmonies. Then he began to let his

fancy play with it, and you heard the lovely air pass through endless inversions and variations, until its sweet simplicity was enriched with a most luxuriant embroidery of sound. Then minor modulations crept in, until, suddenly, you hear an awful crash, a veritable discord, and you cry, "That is not music." If it stopped there, it would not be music. Listen further, and you shall hear the diminished intervals of the dissonance widen into euphony, until, at the last, the player's theme reappears in a glad burst of major melody. The hands of the Almighty Master are on the keyboard of life, and, whatever discords man may make, He knows how to resolve them all into His majestic harmony. The thought and theme of the Master shall triumph in spite of all the dissonance of rebellious wills and lives.

III. Let us study THE GRADUAL PROCESS OF HARDENING.

It is not usually all done at once. There may, occasionally, be a choice so critical, so willful, and in the face of such a blaze of light, that it consummates, once for all, the suicide of a soul. The whole moral nature may be so involved in one determined rejection of God that the man consciously

shuts the gate of opportunity with a jar that makes Heaven shudder and sends a fresh pang to the wounded heart of Jesus Christ. But it is not commonly so. This Pharaoh was doubtless once a thoughtless boy, possibly with a boy's dreams and ideals of a noble and useful reign. Who knows what story of faithlessness to many a worthy purpose, wise counsel, and heavenly influence lay back of the fateful choice which at last sealed his doom? Over the wayside path there had passed more than one dray of business and chariot of pleasure before the hardened soil rejected the living seed that fell from the Sower's hand.

1. *Trend of character is easily established.*

All acts become easier by repetition. This is true, not only of the organism through which we act, but of the conscious life behind it. Disobedience darkens, obedience illumines the soul. We talk much in these days of heredity and environment; and these factors are indeed important in the shaping of our lives. But they are all less potent than the acquired factors created by the human will. We are not the playthings of fate, the slaves of necessity, the creatures of circumstance; we are responsible for our lives. The direst necessity that can

control us is of our own creation, either an angel of goodness we have formed through holy choices, or an awful Frankenstein we shape within the breast for our own undoing.

“Man is his own star, and the soul who can
Render an honest and a perfect man
Commands all light, all influence, all fate;
Nothing to him falls early or too late;
Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,
Our fatal shadows that walk by us still.

2. *There is a pristine purity we do well to guard.*

The budding life of youth has a flexibility that belongs to no later period. There is a plasticity of soul easily fashioned for good or evil, a freshness of heart easily lost. The young do well to guard this morning dew, this spring bloom of their nature. Jesus taught us that the little children, and those like them, are in the kingdom of heaven. As in the exquisite image of Thomas Middleton,

“Upon those lips the sweet fresh buds of youth,
The holy dew of prayer lies, like a pearl
Dropt from the opening eyelids of the morn
Upon a bashful rose.”

Ah! I have seen a rose, the garden's queen, the dewdrops trembling on its lips in the fresh June dawn, but before midnight it had blushed on the

bosom of beauty, to be cast away a soiled and withered thing. I have seen the butterfly, with all the iridescent glories of the rainbow on its wings, clutched by a boy's rude hand, who, at one coarse touch, destroyed more loveliness than all his life shall create. I have seen the frost pictures on the window-pane, delicate traceries of leaves and ferns, as though the ghosts of dead summer had laid their cheeks there in the frosty night; but before noon the heat, the touch of baby's fingers, had destroyed it all, and it melted away in great tears, as if nature were weeping at the loss of so much loveliness. There is something sadder than that: I have known a soul, as fair and fragrant as the rose, as glittering in promise as the butterfly's wings, as exquisite in its innocence and possible purity as the etching of the frost,—and the soil of sin, the clutch of selfishness, and the heat of passion have robbed it of its first grace, and left it withered, marred, and ruined.

3. *Willful sin becomes a compelling power in life.*

The sin which was ours becomes, as it were, an alien power over our lives. It was the creature of our choice, but has now become a thing external

to our wills. As Euripides exclaims in *Medea*, "Lust is mightier than all my determinations." Perhaps the most tremendous picture of this in all literature is that given by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*. The murder of Duncan has been fully planned, and the crime is complete so far as the will of Macbeth is concerned. And so complete is it that the dark deed has become a thing external to him, leading and compelling him on. It is visualized to his guilty conscience as a floating dagger in the air.

"Is this a dagger that I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee;
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou but . . .
A dagger of the mind, a false creation
Proceeding from the heat-oppreséd brain?
Thou marshalest me the way that I WAS going."

A lesser literary artist would have written "*am going.*" But our great English master knew better. He knew that the heart may be so set to do evil, that even future sin dwells there as a finished thing; sin has become lord of life.

4. *This involves the possibility of lost spiritual faculty.*

At last comes the blighting of power; spiritual paralysis seizes the nature; judicial blindness set-

tles down upon the soul. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Conscience is silent, goodness trampled under foot, principle turned into policy and truth into falsehood. Joy folds her wings and dies, faith becomes blind, hope snaps her anchor and is adrift, and love is frozen in the chill embrace of selfishness.

The great Napoleon is the grand historical example of the blindness that may follow selfish choices. As long as the mighty conqueror was the incarnation of democracy, the champion of the rights of the common man, so long he was victorious everywhere. But when the passion for freedom gave way to dreams of imperial splendor, when at the sacrifice of love, honor, and justice, he would at any cost found a dynasty, with the moral decline the man became the dupe of his own deceptions. In breach of sworn faith, against the judgment of his wisest counselors, repelling the pleadings of Eugene, and of the only person he ever really loved, his brother Joseph, he entered upon the fatal Russian campaign; and on one awful night, with the flames of burning Moscow for a pencil, God wrote upon the skyey pavements of heaven the eternal doom of the hardened victim of unrestrained self-will. "God shall send

them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."

"And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them that do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

A dead man lies in yonder room, facing the east. The morning sun may lay its light across his face, but the eyes shall no more open to the day; the morning bells shall not arouse him, nor the prattle of little children on the stairway either disturb or gladden him. The tumult of traffic may awaken in the busy street; but he no more shall fling his energies into the strenuous tide of toil. Yonder is a man in whose living body the spiritual nature lies dead; his moral being is a corpse. The dawning light of God's grace gives no pleasure to his inward vision; the bells of gospel invitation, the joyous shouts of redeemed souls, the stirring activities of the spiritual world all about him,—none of these

awaken response in the reprobate heart. "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone."

"There is a line, by us unseen,
That crosses every path,
That marks the boundary between
God's patience and His wrath;

To pass that limit is to die,
To die as if by stealth;
It does not quench the beaming eye,
Nor pale the glow of health.

O, where is that mysterious bourne,
By which our path is crossed,
Beyond which God Himself hath sworn
That he who goes is lost?"

In one of his most repulsive stories, Zola has furnished a terrible illustration. A loaded train of drunken, shouting, singing soldiers has pulled out of a Paris railway station, bound for the front, in the Franco-Prussian war. The engineer and fireman are enemies. At last a vile word of insult passes between them, and they grapple in a death struggle that only ends as one draws the other with him through the cab window, to be crushed beneath the rolling wheels of the engine they were driving. The boilers are full, the furnace is stoked, the throttle-valve is open, and forward into the night rolls the living freight of souls, wild with the excitement

of war and the mad delirium of drink,—on, on, to horrible and inevitable doom! Every one of us is like that train, with a horde of fierce passions and wild desires aboard. If only we can keep will and conscience alive, we can bring our hazardous freight safely through, and it shall become an army to fight for God. But if will is paralyzed and conscience drugged, there remains only “a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries.”

Does God harden a human heart? Certainly not in any sense that puts any but a loving, saving intent in His every act of will toward us. The words of the Quaker poet are as true as they are beautiful:

“I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air:
I only know I can not drift
Beyond His love and care.

And so beside the silent sea,
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.”

“I can not drift beyond His love;” “No harm from Him can come to me,”—how often that has been quoted in Universalist pulpits! Whittier feared that it might be so used by souls who would reck-

lessly presume upon the Divine mercy ; and therefore he wrote the "Answer :"

"Though God be good and free be heaven,
No force Divine can love compel;
And though the song of sins forgiven
Many sound through lowest hell,
The sweet persuasion of His voice
Respects thy sanctity of will.
He giveth day: thou hast thy choice
To walk in darkness still.

Forever round the mercy-seat
The guiding lights of love shall burn;
But what if, habit-bound, thy feet
Shall lack the will to turn?

What if thine eye refuse to see,
Thine ear of heaven's free welcome fail,
And thou a willing captive be,
Thyself thy own dark jail?"

We do well to cherish all Godward tendencies, to make the most of the tides of the soul. I saw a great ocean liner, the *St. Louis*, on the sands near Long Branch. For days the tugs labored to pull her off. The effort was always made at the time of high tide. Every tide missed, created more intense anxiety; for all knew that the very swell of ocean that might bear the ship to safety, if unused, only buried her more deeply in the sands. There are high tides of spiritual opportunity, when

the attraction of heavenly influences makes the whole human sea swell toward the skies. It may be high tide with some soul here, this hour. O, soul, soul, go out to sea! While wave on wave the rising tides of grace come welling in from God and cover the sands of sin, let us float on the full flood of salvation out upon the boundless ocean of Jesus' love. Let no ebbing tide leave you deeper in the smothering sands of obdurate self-will. Perhaps before another springtide has come, the tempests of trouble and wrath shall break the soul's bark into wreckage. Forever flow the tides of grace; but what serve they to the wrecked soul?

"O come, sinner, come, for the tide is receding,
And the Savior will soon and forever cease pleading."

"To-day, if ye will hear His voice, *harden not your hearts.*"

VI.

MARCHING TO MUSIC.

"Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."—Psa. cxix, 54.

THE literary structure of this one hundred and nineteenth Psalm is exceedingly artificial. It is an ode in praise of the law of God, which runs through twenty-two strophes of eight verses each. It is also an alphabetical acrostic, each one of each set of eight verses in order, beginning with the corresponding letter of the Hebrew alphabet. You would think that such a poem is very mechanical indeed, and utterly devoid of life and spontaneity. Yet the case is quite otherwise; the monotonous music is admirably adapted to preserve the insistent keynote of law, law, law, whose praises run through all possible scales of varied melody.

The passionate prelude of the first Psalm which sings the blessedness of the righteous man, whose

"delight is in the law of Jehovah," here rises to a high sustained symphony. Meditation day and night upon His law has set itself to music, and the statutes of God have become the marching song of the weary pilgrims of earth. The one hundred and nineteenth Psalm is the full blossom of the germ planted in the first.

Not that the music is unmarred by discordant notes; quite otherwise. Minor modulations come in. "Horror hath taken hold of me because of the wicked that forsake Thy law." But again and again the dissonance of earth rises only to be drowned by heavenly harmonics. The horror of the world's wickedness is relieved by a strain of melody out of the heart of God. Above all confusion of time broods the music of eternal order, and it is possible for our lives to keep step, not to the broken noises of earth, but to the rhythm of the Divine Law.

"My life flows on in endless song;
 Above earth's lamentation,
 I catch the sweet though far-off hymn
 That hails a new creation;
 Through all the tumult and the strife
 I hear the music ringing;
 It finds an echo in my life,—
 How can I keep from singing?"

I. THE PILGRIM OF EARTH MAY SING SONGS OF HEAVEN.

This conception of life as a pilgrimage was never quite absent from the Hebrew heart. It was born, doubtless, of the old nomad life, which lived in tradition as the romantic background of its history. The patriarchal heroes of the race, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, had been dwellers in tents, and had wandered from place to place, "confessing that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." The common ancestor, Israel, sorrowfully spoke to Pharaoh of "the days of the years of my pilgrimage," and every devout Israelite adopted the same plaintive refrain: "For I am a stranger with thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were." And David also sang, "We are strangers before Thee and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are a shadow, and there is none abiding." Something of the weird loneliness of the wilderness forever haunted the imagination of Israel; the world is an awful silence, broken only by the thunder of a Divine voice, and ever moves on through the stillness at the bidding of the voice.

1. *Pilgrimage is a true picture of human life.*

Life, for the city dweller, as well as the nomad, is a pilgrimage. It is as true of the mighty walls of granite as the canvas walls of the tent, that it is but a transient dwelling for any life, and it too shall pass away.

"The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this unsubstantial pageant, faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

The mountains whose seeming solidity mocks the fleeting life of man, and the stars which shine a cold pity on our fugitive existence, are hardly less frail or more abiding than we. We are all gypsies, Arabs, tenting for the night; we shall soon strike canvas and move on.

"Think, in this battered caravanserai,
Whose portals are alternate night and day,
How sultan after sultan with his pomp
Abode his destined time, and went his way.

'T is but a tent, where takes his midday's rest
A sultan to the realm of Death address;
The sultan rises, and the dark Ferash
Strikes and prepares it for another guest."

2. *The pilgrimage of life is made glad with song.*

There is a touch of melancholy in this conception of life as a pilgrimage, until we cheer the way with music. Pilgrims we are, but we may be singing pilgrims, and beguile the wilderness way with ringing songs,—

“Even as pilgrims, who journey afar from their home and their country,
Sing as they go, and, singing forget they are weary and wayworn.”

Perhaps there is no happier resource on a hard march than music. An Arabian saying has it, “Song is like the dew of heaven on the bosom of the desert; it cools the path of the traveler.” The band is not the least effective part of the army. The stirring strains of martial music have often revived flagging strength, renewed failing courage and won a half-lost battle. It was to the superb swing of the “Marseillaise,” “Ye sons of freedom, wake to glory,” that the French troops under Napoleon dared the icy barriers of the Alps, and made a path to the conquest of Italy. Again and again, in the great allegory, Bunyan makes his pilgrim relieve the difficult road with snatches of sacred song.

Blessed are they who have learned to sing as they

journey! Through toil and weariness, through gloom and despair, through pain and anguish, the voice of song arises, and we feel ourselves immortal. There are lives that by their very harmony seem to bring heaven down to earth, all of whose words and actions seem timed to some heavenly rhythm.

“There are in this loud stunning tide of human care and crime
 With whom the melody abides of the everlasting chime;
 Who carry music in their heart
 Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
 Plying their daily task with busier feet
 Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.”

3. *The pilgrim's songs are songs of home.*

The pilgrimage of earth need not be aimless wandering. It is easy enough to chant dirges of despair as we contemplate the fleeting, fading life of man. The pessimistic Persian poet, already quoted, wails out—

“A moment's halt, a momentary taste
 Of Being from the well within the waste
 And lo, the phantom caravan has reached
 The Nothing it set out for:—O make haste!”

All healthy souls know that to be false. Ours is more than a “momentary taste of Being,” and our destiny is more than Nothing. If we, too, cry,

"Make haste!" it is because eternity beckons us, and there awaits us no "angel of the darker drink," but the white-winged heralds of immortality.

This earth is a strange country to the immortal nature of man. The birthland and native country of the human soul is elsewhere. Heaven draws us as the southern summer draws the migratory birds. The prophet of the restoration of captive Israel hears the returning exiles, singing as they joyfully press forward by the path cast up in the wilderness.

"The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Nothing but other-world music can really cheer us. No ballads of heroic tradition; no carols of war, wine, or love; no lyrics of merely mundane feeling, can conquer the sense of the frailty and insecurity of this passing world. When the dead leaves fall about us, and the flowers of love and hope are faded; when the clouds fall heavy on the coffin-lid, and the dearest treasures of earth vanish,—nothing can comfort but to hear the chimes of the eternity from which we came and toward which we are traveling. We refuse to "hang our harps upon the willow," and, in spite of the wail of the Baby-

lonian exiles, we will "sing the Lord's song in a strange land." Even when the throat is choked with sobbing and the voice hushed because "the daughters of music are brought low," still the soul in its hope and longing will sing on, like the murmur of the sea-shell, which

"Remembers its august abode,
And murmurs as the ocean murmurs there."

Our pilgrim path lies between two eternities. We know that this "house of our pilgrimage" is but an inn on the road to "our Father's house." Just because we can "tarry but a night," we rejoice to sing songs of the everlasting day. Weariness sings of rest, pain chants a lay of lasting peace, sorrow lifts up its voice in joy, and dying nature raises the psalm of eternal life. That we are sojourners is an argument for home and a reason for singing. As Wordsworth has it,—the soul comes "from God, who is our Home," and sometimes

"In a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have glimpse of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children playing on the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore."

In our too dominant sense of mortality we sometimes talk of "passing into eternity;" but we are there already. Our eternity is here and near, if we did but know it; we are bathed in its beauty, girded by its glory, and swathed in its songs.

4. *God is the music of the pilgrim life.*

Listen in the text to the answering beat of the twin pronouns, "Thy" and "my," and note how they bring together God and the human soul: "*Thy* statutes have been *my* songs." God is the music of life; that is the thought that sweeps the chords of the heart with majestic harmonies. He is the great musician, we are but the instruments. In the Apocalypse the redeemed are described as "having the harps of God;" indeed, they are themselves the harps of God. As the Æolian harp sings when touched by the fingers of the wind, so may the soul of man be tuned and touched by the Spirit of God. It is like that myth of the statue of Memnon at Thebes, of which it was fabled that the granite lips uttered a dulcet note of music when first touched by the morning light; we are so made as to break forth into song when a ray from His eternal sunlight touches our heart and lips.

Every object has its keynote to which it responds in sympathetic vibrations. Strange stories are told of a fiddler who found the keynote of a bridge, and was able by insistent playing on that string to make it sway from its anchorage and at last to fiddle it down! That is much more than a half truth when applied to our human hearts. They are strung to quiver in response to this great strain, this keynote,—God. The hymnody that cheers life's journey first beat out its music in the perfect melodies sung by the Master's heart. The God of the Bible is pictured as a happy God who sometimes sings: "He will joy over thee with singing." It is "God, our Maker, who giveth songs in the night;" it is He who puts a new song into the mouth of the saved man. Our highest human happiness is that we may enter into the joy of the Lord, the joy of redeeming love.

There are no other songs like these. Earth has its secular songs, sweet and inspiring,—as boat songs, when the oars keep time to the tune; harvest songs, accompanied by the silvery rustle of the falling grain; national songs, in which a people raise the high anthem of a nation's pride; love lays, which bear the burden of the heart's passion and tender-

ness. But sweetest of all are the high praises of God, when heart and voice are brought into concord with heavenly harmonies.

II. THE LAW OF HEAVEN IS THE MUSIC OF EARTH.

"Statutes, songs,"—what a singular association! At first it seems a very strange thought, for we do not ordinarily associate laws with music. The dry and dreary study of the law appears quite unlike the inspiring choral art. Our courts of justice do not commonly have a choir to open their sessions or to accompany their proceedings. Congress and other legislative bodies do not enliven their proceedings with songs. There is nothing lyric about civil law. I do not suppose there is much music, or poetry, either, about the Revised Statutes of the United States, the Code of Michigan, or the city ordinances of Detroit. Quite frequently they are not even good prose.

Yet the idea of music is not so remote from even human law as, at first sight, we would think. The early legislation of primitive peoples not unfrequently was expressed in verse; such, for example, as the famous Laws of the Twelve Tables, the beginnings of Roman jurisprudence. But in the text it is the statutes of God, and not those of Manu,

Lycurgus, Solon, or Numa, that become the happy hymns sung by the pilgrims of earth. Though the laws of man be without rhyme or reason, the laws of God are Divine poetry, and sing their way into our earthly life.

1. *All music is the child of Law and a witness to the Lawgiver.*

Music is made by law; it is the creature of order. The greatest musician is as much bound by these laws as the least. Each of its three elements is determined by mathematical laws as fixed and inviolable as the laws of motion that regulate heavenly bodies. Rhythm, with its regular beat and measured movement; melody, with its consecutive intervals ruled by laws of assonance; harmony, with its parallel waves blending according to fixed principles,—all are controlled by laws as certain as gravitation. Man does not make these laws, he discovers them. In art, as in science, man must “think God’s thoughts after Him.”

No wonder that the Greeks made music an important branch of education, as teaching the beauty of order and symmetry, and the majesty of law. Music means obedience. There can be in it no self-will. Can we find a better illustration of subordi-

nation than a great orchestra where many and varied instruments obey every movement of the conductor's baton, who himself must follow the score of the composer, and he in turn must write his tone-poem according to the eternal laws of acoustics which were fixed for the first chorus of the morning stars? Noise is not music. The clangor of bells, the shrieking of engines, the clamor of voices,—in these the self-will is voiced. Anarchy sings no songs and keeps no step with the Divine purpose. The pilgrimage of the children of disobedience is a wild vagabondage, cheered by no songs and regulated by no law. It is the pledge of the safety of human society, that the hosts of misrule can never raise an army that can march in time. Lawlessness has no organizing power. Somewhere its waves break helplessly against the granite cliffs of the eternal laws of God. Music is a witness to a righteous King and a moral government of the world.

2. The law of God is set to music.

All the pictures of the created universe found in the Holy Scriptures make it to have its beginning and consummation in song. Its foundations were laid amid the glad chantings of the morning stars, its walls arose with song of angelic rejoicing, and

its final glories shall be revealed when Law and Love sing together the song of Moses and the Lamb, with "the voice of a great multitude, the voice of many waters, and the voice of mighty thunderings."

"From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began;
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in man."

The "music of the spheres," taught by Pythagoras, is not wholly a fable.

"There's not the smallest orb that thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still choiring to the young-eyed cherubim."

As they tread on soft feet of light through the spheric dance, the heavenly bodies are still telling the glory of God.

The heavenly sphere, the realm of God and angels, is the homeland of song. Wherever its bright barriers have opened upon the gloom of our earthly pilgrimage, rapturous psalmody has always broken through. Isaiah saw the pillared strength of the temple of Jehovah sway to the praises of the seraphs that excel in strength, as they chanted the Trisagion with its mighty triple rhythm: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts; heaven and earth are

full of Thy glory." Shepherds in the fields about Bethlehem saw the starry pavements break up to let through clouds of glory, throngs of angels and a cataract of tumultuous song: "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good-will to men." And to John on Patmos, again the shining doors stand open, and the perfumed air is stirred with a new and Divine melody, unheard in heaven before, the new song of the first-begotten of earth.

All sin is discord, all holiness is harmony. Heaven is the harmony of hearts and wills; its shining and singing hosts "do His pleasure," "hearkening unto the voice of His word." Earth makes noises, but heaven makes music, for it is the home of perfect law and the sphere of the perfect doing of God's will. Law, Duty—these make firm the pillars of the eternal world, and these alone secure the endurance of the created universe.

"Through Thee, the stars are free from wrong:

And the most ancient heavens through Thee are firm and strong."

3. *That which is law in heaven becomes music on earth.*

The commonplace of heaven is the best of earth. What here we call the ideal, to which we try painfully to fashion the rebellious clay of time, is the

real there, to which all glorified persons and things gladly conform.

Art, which is man's effort freely to reproduce the ideal, is thus a witness for God. It is the attempt of man to incarnate a higher than natural beauty, to make the creations of his hands and brain shine with

“The light that never was on land or sea.”

It is a taste of the eternal beauty born into time, a gleam of the supernal splendor. Of all arts, music is the most spiritual, and most expensive of the subtlest states of the mind. It can say what can never be spoken in language or be expressed in form or color. It is the speech of emotion, the chosen language of joy and love. Therefore, nothing is so fit as music to express the heavenly life. There is a mystic element in music by which it suggests the world of heavenly harmony out of which it came. As a testimony to spirit, Browning in “Abt Vogler” sets it above the other arts:

“God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear,
The rest may reason and welcome,—’t is we musicians
know.”

All the music of earth has that of heaven as its pattern and type; all the poetry of earth is an echo of celestial songs; all the pictures of earth are a

glimpse of its glory. All, all are but glimpses of God, who is perfect harmony and perfect beauty. The music of the Divine character, which is at once righteous law and holy harmony, sounds above the weariness of man's life, bringing him back to God.

4. *Law lends music to the pilgrim life because it speaks of permanence.*

Of the more than ten words which are used in this Psalm as synonyms of "law," the one in the text is the strongest. "Statutes"—that which is fixed, decreed. It stands in the most direct contrast with the transient life of man. In our pilgrim march, girt with graves and chasmed with change, we long for the deathless and enduring. Even the tyranny of fate would be better than the caprice of chance. We have something better than either—the loving will of a righteous Governor, from whom we came and to whom we are bound. Life has no finer inspiration than this, that all the passing generations of man can securely house themselves, as in an abiding dwelling-place, in Him who is from everlasting to everlasting our God. We hush the clamor of our noisy, passing years, and into our life comes the glad but solemn music of His Eternity. And so the "beauty of the Lord" fashions itself on

the fading glory of our fleeting life, and by His changeless will even the work of mortal hands is established forever. Earth decays and time works changes, but the everlasting certainties sing on forever. The pilgrim's song is no mere impulse, no wild skyrocket blazing in uncertain and quickly-dying splendor; it is a steadfast star which burns on with an ever-undimmed luster.

"Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in the heavens." Amidst the shadows of the transient we sing the glory of the permanent sphere to which we are more closely allied than to the passing shows of life. We live in tents like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but, like them, we "look for the city that hath foundations." When our earthly lamps go out and the stars fall from the sky, we still can sing of the shadowless splendor of the land that never knows night. Permanence singing in the house of change—it is life triumphing over death, and spirit conquering sense. Beyond our flowers that fade and fall, we breathe the fragrance of blooms that never blight. Amid the graves that gape to swallow up our loves, we rejoice in that undying love which shall knit all raveled friendships up, and make whole the rents of time. There is no "dying fall" in the note the singing pilgrim raises; it is born of

eternity and triumphs over time. It is law that sings, chance and fate can not overwhelm us.

III. THE PILGRIM LIFE OF MAN SHOULD BE BROUGHT
INTO HARMONY WITH THE MUSIC OF LAW.

It is the purpose of God to bring all things into harmony with His law; that is, with Himself. The mountain-top of all prayer is this: "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." To know, to love, to do the perfect will—that is the highest blessedness of man. Then shall every human soul become a lyre of praise, and every human life a lyric of joy. In such passages as the text and the Psalm which contains it, full of rapturous delight in and love of the law of God, the Old Testament is already touched by the spirit of the New. When law becomes lyrical, it is a germinal gospel. For the gospel does not make void the law, but fulfills it in that "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" which comes from profounder depths of the heart and will of God than all positive ordinances. When the pilgrim of earth beholds the beauty of the eternal nature of God, his loyal love is stirred to sing with Faber:

"Ride on, ride on triumphantly,
Thou glorious Will, ride on;
Faith's pilgrim sons behind Thee take
The road that Thou hast gone."

I. *Our natural life is out of harmony with the statutes of God.*

Until attuned to the music of the Divine Law, man is like an unstrung harp, giving back to every touch only harshest discords. Earth is a Babel of discordant noises, and the sinning heart of man the chief disturber of the unison of being. Read the story of the wilderness wanderings of Israel, which probably suggested the imagery of our text. Pre-luded by trumpet blast and the quivering of the earth at the touch of Jehovah, they heard in the heart of the desert the awful voice of Law, delivered in the midst of angelic choruses and with the terrible accompaniment of heaven's thunders. How imperfectly they responded to its solemn music! All the way of their wandering was filled with the harsh dissonance of their murmurings; and that is a true picture of the natural life of man. All the chords of his character, formed for sweetest concord, are like "sweet bells jangled, out of tune."

Nor is it wholly "a pathetic fallacy," as Ruskin calls it, that hears in the physical world a harsh echo of man's moral discord.

"The winds can never sing, but they must wail;
Waters lift up sad voices in the vale;
One mountain hollow to another calls
With broken cries of plaining waterfalls."

The shadow of our sin and sorrow has fallen across the whole world, and instead of the universe its Maker called "very good," vibrating in sympathy with the song of the morning stars, we hear the jarring of the creation that "groans and travails together in pain:"

It is the violation of the statutes of God that has untuned the heart of man, blasted the joy of nature, and filled society with conflict and tumult. No star or soul can break loose from the eternal chimes of order and law without becoming a strident note, to be cast out of the choir of being; a "wandering star, to which is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." Therefore is the glory gone out of our hearts, the burden of song stilled upon our lips, and the music of life turned to discordant wailings—we have trodden His statutes under foot.

"O earth, so full of dreary noises!
O men, with wailing in your voices!"

All your misery is born of the rebellious will. The Master Musician still leads the mighty chorus of law and love, to charm our souls back into submissive harmony.

2. *In Jesus Christ we hear most perfectly the music of the Divine mind.*

One life has appeared among men, which, without jar or discord, expressed the full beauty of the law and will of God. It is the life of Jesus of Nazareth, whose perfect obedience to every monition of His Father's will related Him to the heavenly and eternal order, "as perfect music unto noble words." The Son of man, alone of our humanity, can make His own the great prophetic cry of full surrender, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!"

Jesus has filled the world with song. The great English divine, Hooker, said of law, "Her seat is in the bosom of God, and her voice is the harmony of the world." Those words apply still more truly to the Lord Jesus. Had we still seen anything grim-visaged in the law, it became a heavenly song when we saw it "made honorable" in His sinless life. And His is the music that shall subdue our earthly discord and restore the last harmony of creation. Greek mythology fables that the walls of Thebes were built into beauty by stones that moved to their places obedient to the mere sound of the lyre of Orpheus. Thomas Carlyle catches the deepest significance of the myth when he says: "Our highest

Orpheus walked in Judea eighteen hundred years ago; His sphere-melody, flowing in wild nature-tones, took captive the ravished souls of men; and, being of a truth sphere-melody, still flows and sounds, though now with manifold accompaniments and rich symphonies, through all our hearts; and modulates and divinely leads them."

It is to the music of His will and word that the broken ruins of our nature, and at last all the living stones of earth, shall dance to their places in the walls of the New Jerusalem.

"Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also is become my salvation." Such is the song of Moses, lawgiver of Jehovah, as he celebrates the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. A deeper meaning it has for us when we give it a gospel interpretation, and make it the song of the Lamb. It still thrills with the majesty of law, "Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." But as they hear it in heaven, it is a new song; the fragrant air trembles by a new and Divine melody unheard before. The chant of creation has become the chorus of the new creation—the song of redemption through the blood of the Lamb.

O songless souls, that have lost the heaven out of

your hearts! ye whose natures are filled with strife and turmoil; ye to whom the world is a desert waste, full of forced marches that mean nothing; ye in whom rebellious self-will has set up its jangle of harsh worldly noises—bring, I beseech you, the broken harps of your nature to Jesus Christ. He, the greater Son of the great harper of Israel, will restring the harpstrings of our lives and attune them to the heavenly music of His own perfect life. Then again will the voice of the strongest law become to us the voice of sweetest love to cheer our earthly sorrows, and we shall make our own the words of the ancient worshiper: "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage."

It is interesting to listen to the tuning of an orchestra before the concert begins. You can hear the several instruments slowly closing up the false intervals, and, as they all approach concert pitch, coming into unison with each other. So has God in Christ sounded the keynote of our life. Shall we not, one by one, bring our hearts and lives into harmony with His holy will? At last the Perfect One shall lift with pierced hand the baton of light, and the vast multitude that no man can number shall join the triumphant shout of the Hallelujah Chorus, "He shall reign for ever and ever." That strain of His

perfect sovereignty and dominion shall be taken up rapturously by all the flaming choirs of the redeemed, and flung from part to part and voice to voice, until the very energies of heaven seem exhausted, and the mighty strain of a universal submission dies away before "the great white throne and Him that sitteth thereon." At last the pilgrim song of earth, born of loyal love of law, shall blend in heavenly hal-lujahs, whose only resting-place is the consummate calm of the eternal "Amen!"

VII.

THE FULLNESS OF GOD.

AN EXPOSITION.

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled unto all the fullness of God. Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.”—Eph. iii, 14-21, R. V.

DID you ever hear any one praying for you? It is a holy memory, that of overhearing a father, or mother, or friend, in their personal devotions, holding up our names to God in earnest intercession. Once, on entering my church in Baltimore, I heard, from the door of a classroom that stood ajar, the voice of one of the holiest men I ever knew pleading with God for me, his pastor. The uplift of that moment abides with me after nearly twenty years.

For true prayer is a revelation in at least two ways. First, it reveals the soul-life of him who prays. The motions of our inner life in the moment of genuine prayer, as they interpret themselves in speech and act, are the surest possible index of the religious character. Second, it is in large measure a revelation of the deepest need of him for whom prayer is offered. We are frequently all too unconscious of our own spiritual defects and shortcomings. If we could only hear what the holiest men and women who know us ask for when they pray for us, we would gain a glimpse of our truest selves, and freshly realize what is lacking in the religious temper of our lives.

We are standing outside the closet door of the Apostle Paul, and overhearing a great soul as he climbs the mountain of intercession. His prayer reveals the breadth of his spiritual vision, the richness

of his personal experience, and the warmth of his loving heart. It also reveals what, in his inspired judgment, was the largest need of the Church. As such a revelation, it is full of instruction to the Church in every generation. Let us, in this light, devoutly study the fullness of blessing for which the apostle prays.

I. THE NATURE OF THE BLESSING.

This is not, in the ordinary sense of the word, a "higher-life" prayer. It is not, primarily, either faith or love with which he prays that the Church may be endowed. These are presumed as prime conditions of the larger fullness for which he is pleading. It is not some particular work of the Divine grace, some definite achievement in the spiritual life, which is contemplated; those will come along with the more comprehensive gift for which he is praying. It is rather a prayer for an all-comprehending enlargement of spiritual power in the Church, which shall at once make possible every spiritual gift and every conceivable work of grace.

1. *It is a prayer for knowledge.*

This is involved in the motive of this entire letter to the Ephesians. It is a vision into the eternal purpose of God to unify all things in Christ. The

mighty argument sees this purpose as it flows from the electing love of God in eternity and is realized in time, "that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both of which are in heaven and on earth." The Church is conceived as the ubiquitous body of the ascended Lord, "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

This "mystery of His will," Paul is a minister to make known to the Gentile world, that all men might come into the "fellowship of the mystery." And so he prays for the enlargement of their knowledge, that through a more perfect apprehension of the purpose of God they might possess the "unsearchable riches of Christ." He felt that this vaster vision of the sweep and scope of the infinite plan of God would immeasurably enrich personal experience.

A shallow and ignorant fanaticism sometimes fails to regard knowledge as a grace at all. It fatuously misunderstands John Wesley when he describes evangelical perfection as perfection in love rather than in knowledge, and so blundering and stupid saints profess to be entirely sanctified and excuse their manifest frailties by the defense, "We are not made perfect in knowledge." There is a guilty ignorance of the will of God, which is itself a

sin to be repented of. You "did not know any better?" You ought to have known better.

"Evil is wrought by want of thought
As well as want of love."

Knowledge is a Christian grace and an essential condition of many higher graces. "Add to your faith, knowledge," says St. Peter; and again exhorts, "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." "The perfect manhood" which is contemplated by Paul in this epistle is one which is reached by "the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God." It is not a narrow and unripe purity, which a child or a fool may attain, but a full-orbed and matured manhood, which is the insistent petition of the Ephesian letter.

2. This knowledge is founded in Faith.

Faith, in the New Testament, has a moral and an intellectual side. It is conceived both as an act of will and a state of mind. Saving faith is a moral act of voluntary trust, by which the sinner accepts Jesus as Savior; but faith also involves spiritual perception; it rests on a judgment of moral and spiritual values. It is an inspired insight, by which the unseen is assured and the future held as a pres-

ent possession. The faith which saves and the faith by which we live are one; but the former is an act of the will, while the latter is the vision of the soul. Thus faith issues in knowledge. Faith is the door by which Christ and all the invisible world of spiritual reality enters the inner man.

Faith and knowledge never can be separated without harm. The intellectual temperament tries to find knowledge without beginning with faith, and builds up a cold and lifeless orthodoxy; the ignorant devotee has faith enough, but fails to perfect it in knowledge, and becomes the narrow bigot or the wild fanatic. The essence of the blessing is through faith; the fullness of the blessing is through knowledge.

3. *The knowledge prayed for is spiritual enlightenment.*

It is more than a mere intellectual attainment; it is inspired insight. It is what Paul prays for in the first chapter: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of His

calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the sense."

Life is enlarged and enriched by larger light. Yonder in the meadows, all abloom with the crimson clover, stand the large-eyed kine, lazily feeding in the rich forage. The artist, who has set his easel there, may have no better eyes than the cows; but he sees more, for he sees with something which is behind the eyes; he sees the violet light that plays in the shadows, and the changing shades of rose that come and go as the breeze sways the clover-tops. There is many an untaught Christian who is standing kneedeep in the fields of blessing, lazily happy in cruder experiences, for whom there waits a glorious fullness when God shall open his inward sight to the deeper and broader meanings of the very life into which he has entered.

II. THE CONDITIONS OF THE BLESSING.

The achievement of this knowledge is by a process of Divine education. The highest spiritual attainments are conditioned upon certain spiritual conditions. There is an alphabet of the Divine character which we must learn before we can spell out the sweet poem of His love. What are some of these conditions?

I. *A strengthened mind.*

Paul prays "that ye may be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." A characteristic gift of the Gospel is new power. There is a spiritual gymnastic needed to fortify the soul and strengthen it for higher attainments. God's people must be, in the best sense of that word, a strong-minded people. Religion is not a weak and nerveless, but a strong and heroic thing. The body may be a giant and the soul a dwarf. Before the fullness of God can come into us, new capacity must be given, and our inner natures grow to stalwart dimensions. It was no very great error when a colored preacher quoted, "Judge not the Lord by feeble *saints*;" for it would indeed be a severe reflection on both the power and goodness of God if He were judged by the flabbiness and feebleness of some of His children.

Strength is needed to support the burden of the blessing which is to follow. Said Jesus to His disciples, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye are not able to bear them now." And Paul found in the childish immaturity of the Corinthian Church a reason for not instructing them in that profounder spiritual wisdom which can only be spoken to them

that are perfect. "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." God will keep His dear children on spoon victuals until they gain force of spirit to contain His fullness. There have been great moments of mighty blessing in some of our lives, when in such pressure of glory His grace flooded our soul, that we have cried out in the very weakness of our earthen vessels, "O Lord, stay Thy hand, lest I die of Thy delights!" Let us rather pray with Paul for the inward strength which shall prepare the way for the fullness of God.

2. *The power of an ever-present Ideal.*

The prayer goes on, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." If we are to grow in knowledge the subject of our contemplation must be always before us. I have a friend who carries Greek tragedies in his pocket to read on the street-car; he has become a great Greek scholar. The botanist who would learn botany must spend much time in the field with plants and flowers; the astronomer who would master the system of the heavens must pass his nights straining his eyes through the telescope; the Christian who would become a mature Christian must set his Lord always before him, for

the person of Christ is the very essence of Christianity. There are days, however, when winter frosts have blighted the bloom of summer, and the botanist can not commune with forest or field; there are times when the clouds shall jealously hide the lamps of heaven from the astronomer's gaze; but the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley may forever blossom in the garden of the heart, and the Bright and the Morning Star forever shine in the firmament of the soul.

3. *Fellowship in knowledge.*

We can only achieve the loftiest spiritual vision within the communion of saints. It must be apprehended "with all saints." The very key-thought of Ephesians is oneness. If Gentile and Jew have been made one new man, all earth's buildings are to be builded together into one holy temple for the habitation of the Spirit. The Christian perfection which Paul here teaches is no solitary virtue; it is achieved only in the family in heaven and earth, which owns common Fatherhood with Jesus. He exhorts "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; there is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism: one God and Father of all, who is

above all and through all and in you all." It is no individual, but the whole Church, which goes to form that "perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

No one mind is equal to the study of any science, much less that of salvation. No one age of the Church, no one theologian or religious genius, has ever grasped the whole meaning of the Lord. We must learn to see with them all, to feel man's impotence with Augustine, God's sovereignty with Calvin, the freedom of faith with Luther, and the freeness and fullness of grace with Wesley. We can not fully see or enjoy anything by ourselves; it takes four eyes to see a picture or a landscape. There is something wrong about any man who can sit alone in a restaurant and enjoy a long course dinner. We feed alone, but we eat in company. There are mighty blessings being held back by God in the reserved heavens, until the wounds in the body of Christ have been healed. Not until His Church see eye to eye will the Lord bring again Zion. Real spiritual unity will be the prelude for a new Pentecost:

"Not on one favored head alone
The Pentecostal glory shone;
But flamed o'er all the assembled host
The baptism of the Holy Ghost."

4. *"Rooted and grounded in love."*

Love is the condition of the highest knowledge. Pascal, the greatest of all Frenchmen, said, "Human things must be known to be loved, but Divine things must be loved to be known." Light is the child of love, the blossom of that love that roots itself deep in the heart of Jesus. The rhetoric of the apostle has reached a white heat of passion which breaks through grammar and rhetoric. Love is so great a thing that it needs a mixed metaphor, "rooted and grounded," one derived from the world of nature, and one from the world of art; it is a soil from which the perfect life grows like a tree; it is a foundation from which sanctified character rises like a temple.

III. THE MEASURE OF THE BLESSING.

There really is no measure; we are dealing with incommensurables, our commerce is with the Infinite. Language is exhausted to express it. It is "according to His riches and glory," "according to the power that worketh in us," "the unsearchable riches of Christ." All is measured, not by human standards, but by the Divine nature. Indeed, all religious experience is measured by the notion we

have of God; a poor God makes an impoverished life. To be full-statured Christians we need a great God, and great conceptions of Him. Shriveled souls are brought forth by narrow and bigoted theologies.

And so the prayer goes on to speak of the breadth, the length, depth, and height—of what? The text does not specify. We shall need the context. At the close of the third chapter, Paul had reached the sublime conception of the spiritual temple into which all lives and institutions are to be built; it is a picture of the consummation of the eternal plan to bring together all things in Christ. This is for him

“The one far-off Divine event
To which the whole creation moves.”

As he sees the stately edifice, his soul swells to the vision, and he longs that the Ephesians shall share the greatness of his dream. And so in Ephesians i, 1, he begins to pray, “For this cause, I Paul.” But the mention of his own name stops the full tide of petition, and for thirteen verses he shows his own office as “minister of this mystery,” only resuming the prayer at the fourteenth verse: “For this cause I bow my knees.” Is it not clear that, by height, length, depth, and breadth he means the

dimensions of that temple which pictures for him the eternal purposes of God in Christ? He prays that they may grasp the greatness of the Divine plan.

Modern geometers have theorized of non-Euclidean space of more than three dimensions; Paul seems to have found it in these four measures of the infinite love and thought. Let us study them.

I. *The Breadth.*

The purpose of God in Christ is as big as the universe; it is as wide as the whole diameter of being. As the stars lie like islands in the blue sea of the firmament, so do all creatures in the vast expanse of His love. Once to grasp it would be to lose our littleness and narrowness in the breadth of His vastness.

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man's mind."

Far out beyond our dreaming His care extends and His mercy reaches. O, cribbed and confined hearts, lives that have grown like a plant in a crevice until they are blanched and flattened, grasp but once His greatness, and ye shall gain a wider life! There are some men so narrow-minded that you

have to look at them sideways to see that they have any mind at all. The only remedy is in the fullness of God.

2. *The Length.*

It has protension as well as extension; it fills all time as well as all space. He is "from everlasting to everlasting," the dwelling-place of all godly generations. He cries out to us, who measure by years, months, and days, "Behold, I have loved you with an everlasting love." Himself, His plans, and His love are dateless.

You can find no beginning to it. It is not Calvinism to believe that my salvation is an act belonging to an eternal order. It began in eternity. Suppose an angel should fly back from this hour and perch on the cross-beam of the cross, still back of him he would hear Isaiah heralding and David chanting the coming Redeemer; no, nor at Eden's gate would he find any beginning in that promise, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," which was like a ray from the looks of Jesus, flung backward through the millenniums. No, we must go back, back into eternity, before the mandate of creation, before nothingness curdled into the white foam of stars and systems to break in spray

of offered service at the feet of God; there, in the awful silence of His majestic solitude, was born in the eternal heart the seed of that crimson rose of sacrifice whose perfect beauty hung on the thorny branches of the cross.

Nor is there any end; His promises are for the eternal years, and shall not fail. The river of salvation is no desert stream, to lose itself in the sands, but widens and deepens to the infinite ocean.

3. *The Depth.*

This is the measure of His loving purpose as we follow it from the heights downward. It reaches from the throne to the manger; yea, lower yet, from glory to shame, down to the cruel cross and the awful kingdoms of the dead; down the long stairway of the incarnation to the depths of my sin and sorrow.

"O love, thou fathomless abyss,
My sins are swallowed up in thee."

4. *The Height.*

This is the same dimension as the last, but it is measured from below upward. He stands looking from the platform of earth up to the pinnacle of all being, and sees there the topmost thing of all the universe, crowning the cathedral of creation,

the shining cross of Jesus Christ. In the next chapter he brings the depth and the height together.

“Wherefore He saith: When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things.”

“That He might fill all things!” Such is the ubiquity of the risen and glorified body of our Lord. He went down into the depths and has gone up on high, carrying everywhere, into every nook and cranny of the universe, the perfume of His love and the blood of His sacrifice. The incense fills the whole temple of being, and His blood sprinkles all the doorposts of creation.

“There shall crown Him the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost
crown;

And His love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave, up nor
down,

A place for the creature to stand in!”

O, my soul, sail out, sail out on this wide ocean of redemptive purpose, and, like some new Columbus, steer thy bark beyond the rim of twilight, and ever, ever widening horizons shall greet thee, and new worlds of gracious beauty yield to thy adven-

ture; but thou shalt find no farthest limit to the loving purpose of our God.

O, my soul, press forward with flying feet down all the pathways of eternal years; pass beyond the confines of burning worlds and changing ages; follow, until the weary and exhausted years, in everlasting procession about the eternal throne, fall at last in utter faintness, and wornout time sinks into the arms of eternity,—and thou shalt find no end to the loving purpose of our God.

O, my soul, sink thy plummet in this sea of blessing thousands of fathoms deep, and down beneath all finite measures, undergirding the foundations of the world, lies the deep, fathomless, loving purpose of our God.

O, my soul, like a strong bird on pinions free, climb thou the upper air, and when at last, having overtopped all finite heights, thou shalt, in very faintness of joyous flight, swoon at the feet of God, then shalt thou see, still overarching all, height above height of splendor yet unscaled, the loving purpose of our God.

IV. THE FULLNESS OF THE BLESSING.

It is not every kind of knowledge that fills a man. This does; for in the thought of Paul faith always identifies the believer with the object of faith. To

believe in Christ is to receive Christ, be united with Him, and identified with all His loving, saving acts. The same is true of that completed faith which issues in this vaster spiritual vision. To grasp, in a great moment of revealing, the breadth, length, depth, and height of God's redemptive plan of the ages, is to become one with it, to be "filled with all the fullness of God." The richness and blessedness of the entire body of Christ is reproduced in each individual member, and he becomes a microcosm of the universe of love.

1. *This does not destroy individuality.*

The Christian communion with God is worlds away from pantheistic absorption into the Infinite. The self-surrender to which Jesus calls us is not the spiritual suicide of the mystic or the Buddhist. We lose ourselves to win ourselves. The gospel ideal is not a mutilated or slain selfhood, but one which is dead only to that which marred its perfection; it is a fuller and nobler selfhood, enriched from the infinite fullness. Not less of life, but "life more abundantly," is the gift of the Good Shepherd to His sheep. Each, for himself, may share the comprehension of all saints, may enter into the Divine consciousness, and appropriate the moral attributes of God. In the perfected character of the

individual Christian is to be reflected that perfect Man in whom the fullness of all existence shall at last be gathered. Vision shall secure likeness. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

2. To finite beings this experience involves a paradox.

For the apostle puts no limitation into his petition. He does not pray, as I have heard some good men, that we may be filled with all the "communicable" fullness of God, but boldly and inclusively for *all*. Yet he is quite aware of the paradox, and puts it in the words, "that ye may know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." We may know the unknowable, see the unseen, and, though finite, be filled with the Infinite. This is the constant paradox of the highest life of man. At the summit of our being we lose ourselves in God, yet are ever conscious of that rounded selfhood which marks our human personality. Yet a pint cup can be as full as the ocean; in the face of the violet may dwell as true a blue as in the whole bend of the azure sky; in the dewdrop that lies in the lily's chalice may dwell as perfect a radiance of light as fills the shining firmament.

It is the very mark of the highest knowledge that it issues in ignorance. This is peculiarly so of love;

it forever stands in loving awe before the unrevealed. A noble man said to me of his equally noble wife, on the day of their golden wedding: "I thought I knew her long ago, but every day I find something new and beautiful; she is more mysterious and dearer every day." The more we know, the less we know; the vaster the circle of our knowledge, and the longer its circumference, the more numerous the points at which it touches the unknown. Great things are best known in their immensity. It is best not to give a quantitative measure to a qualitative glory. Who asks, when standing before Niagara, how many gallons of water it discharges in a minute? Who cares to know as he contemplates some vast cathedral, a poem in stone, how many perches of mason work it contains? Our divinest experiences can not be expressed in statistics, and can not be sobered down to general averages.

Christian perfection is not some fixed stadium, which achieved, the soul can rest in sweet self-satisfaction; it is rather a perpetual transformation from glory into glory of the spirit, which reflects, as in a mirror, the image of our glorified Lord. It is to forget the things which are behind, and to reach forth to those things which are before. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded."

V. THE PRAISE DUE FOR THE BLESSING.

Paul allows no final climax to his thought. We thought we had compassed it all in asking for the fullness of God; but praise soars higher than prayer, and rapturously flings itself in adoration before "Him who is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think." A story is told of a pious old woman who had lived a poor, narrow life, far inland among the hills, who was permitted to visit the ocean. When at last the boundless blue stretched before her, losing itself to view beyond the horizon's verge, her starved soul swelled with the sight, and she cried out, "Thank God, at last I've got something there is enough of!" On the mountain-tops of prayer the soul takes flight in praise, bursting in its gladness before the abundance of our God.

Make it a refrain to every petition: Would we be "strengthened by, might with His Spirit in the inner man?" He will do it "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think." Would we have "Christ dwell in our hearts by faith?" He will come in, "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think." Do we long to grasp the "breadth, length, depth, and height" of the Divine plan? He will

impart an insight "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think." Are we longing for the "fullness of God?" We may have it "exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think." And He will do it through the power that raised Christ from the dead, the very "power that worketh in us."

1. *Note the failure of full expression in prayer.*

Language fails; His giving is far beyond our eloquence in asking. Thought is sparingly soluble in speech. We can tell but little of what we think, and still less of what we feel. Language is easily bankrupted as a measure of spiritual worth. An eloquent Welsh preacher, addressing a London congregation, at the climax of his sermon, tongue-tied by the unutterable meaning of his message, exclaimed, "O, if you could only understand Welsh!" And so we long for a thousand tongues to sing His praises.

"How little we bring when we homeward turn
From the realm where the untold glories burn!
Some beauty we've brushed from the lily's bloom,
A taste of the sweetness we can not consume,
A hint of the fullness abounding:—
But its stars die away in the glare of the day,
And the lily fades in the world-sun's glow;
In the chalice of speech there remains but the spray
Of the waters sweet that forever flow
The island of earth-life surrounding."

Thought fails as well as language. The tongue tires before the brain and heart, but they are wearied soon enough. And at last our finite nature stands in helpless silence before the infinite fullness, and all about the splendor seen and felt there roll bright waves of unseen and unimagined glory.

“Fair are the flowers and the children,
But their subtle suggestion is fairer ;
Rare is the rose-burst of dawn,
But the secret that clasps it is rarer ;
Sweet the exultance of song,
But the strain that precedes it is sweeter ;
And never was poem yet writ
But the meaning outmastered the meter.

Great are the symbols of being,
But that which is symbolized is greater ;
Vast the create and beheld,
But vaster the inward creator ;
Under the joy that is felt
Lie the infinite issues of feeling ;
Crowning the glory revealed
Is the glory that crowns the revealing.”

We need not be technical in our prayers. It is not their words or logic, but their fervency, which makes them effectual. We need not fear that God will give out, or hold in our prayers for fear of His unwillingness. Ask largely, O my soul, for thou art asking of a King.

2. *Where prayer breaks down, praise can go in singing.*

"Unto Him be glory in the Church." Paul is in prison. He is writing to a humble Church, largely made up of Greek slaves, Roman freedmen, and out-cast Jews; yet, in spite of the contempt of philosopher or emperor, he claims for them a splendor out-rivaling the tawdriness of earth. To their keeping the eternal God hath committed His glory. They were the choir to chant His endless praises.

"Throughout all generations" no one age can ever exhaust the holy homage. Generation shall pass the swelling tide of hallelujahs to generation. Our Methodist fathers said it audibly and lustily, "Glory to God!" I fear we but whisper it; and shall it be that our children shall only think it? The Church that, knowing the fullness of the blessing, shall revive the dying ministry of praise, will gain by it a militant strength that will win the world to Jesus.

"Unto Him be glory for ever and ever!" Forever shall the prayer go up, forever the blessing come down, and forever the vast tide of praise return to its source. Earth's speech, time-colored, breaks down as it approaches eternity. "Through-

out all generations,"—that is the tribute of time; "for ever and ever,"—that sends the anthem forward into eternity. For praise is the chief occupation of the everlasting ages. As here we praise Him best by service, it may be that there we shall serve Him best by praise.

One day the reunited generations shall know the vaster fullness of the Father's house, and Time shall go out to meet eternity amid the symphonious chanting of heaven and earth:

GLORY BE TO THE FATHER, GLORY BE TO THE SON,
GLORY BE TO THE HOLY GHOST; AS IT WAS IN THE
BEGINNING, IS NOW, AND EVER SHALL BE, WORLD
WITHOUT END. AMEN.

VIII.

AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE.

“And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from them that entered the temple.”—Acts iii, 2.

THE story from which the text is taken is itself a thing of exceeding beauty ; it tells of a beautiful deed, done in a beautiful way, at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. We know very little about this Beautiful Gate itself, for there were many of the temple portals that deserved the designation. Perhaps it was the one of Corinthian bronze, which, Josephus tells us, was even more exquisite in its beauty than those overlaid with silver and gold ; or it may have been that other famous gate which opened toward the valley of Kedron and looked toward Olivet, and which was so lovely with its wrought lily-work that it was called Shushan, or the Lily Gate.

Holy Scripture is full of the symbolism of the door, and gives us ample warrant for using this nar-

rative for wider spiritual suggestion than is at once apparant in its surface meaning. The singers of Israel long ago saw deep significance in these temple gates. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling-places of Jacob." "Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go in unto them and praise the Lord; this gate of the Lord into which the righteous shall enter." And a great prophet of the exile cries out as he catches a vision of the restored Jerusalem, "Thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise."

Not only the visible temple mentioned in the text, but the unseen spiritual house of God which it typifies, has its gates, and the spiritual city, the perfected Church, the Bride of Christ, New Jerusalem which comes down from God out of heaven, is pictured in the apocalyptic vision as having three gates on each side, each gate a lustrous pearl. These gates of God are not like that Porta Santa of St. Peter's Church at Rome, which is closed with mason work, that none may pass, save once in fifty years, when the pope breaks through to celebrate a jubilee mass. For it is testified in Old Testament and New that—

"The happy gates of gospel grace
Stand open night and day."

What lessons, then, may we learn as we stand with Peter, John, and the cripple at the Beautiful Gate of the temple of God?

I. THE BEAUTIFUL GATE TEACHES US THAT GOD'S HOUSE SHOULD BE BEAUTIFUL.

Upon it should be lavished all the loving skill and art of the world. Such was the ancient temple of Jehovah, of which it is written, "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined." A prophet sadly bewails that "our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised Thee is burned with fire," and he exults with joy as in prophetic vision he beholds its rebuilding. "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the larch together, to beautiful the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious."

So should all our places of worship be as fair to see as our means and an honest use of them will allow. There is little force in the contention that noble architecture will repel the poor and humble from the gates of God. It is not the beauty of the temple, but the unbeautiful selfishness of the worshipers, which chiefly keeps the beggar and the cripple from the sanctuary of the Most High. Too often there is a spirit manifested by rich and prosperous

attendants of the house of God which encourages the Pharisee and hypocrite to draw near, and the publican and sinner to stand "afar off." The noblest cathedrals and churches of Europe are thronged by the working masses. Let the poorest outcast feel that, spite of the squalid surroundings of his home and the unlovely details of a sordid life, there is one beautiful thing which belongs to him; and that the Father's house is fairly adorned for the gladness of his eyes and the inspiration of his higher life.

II. THE BEAUTIFUL GATE TEACHES US THAT ALL BEAUTY IS A GATE TO GOD.

I. *Our God loves Beauty.*

He has lavished it freely in all His works. It is everywhere a footprint of His presence, and a witness to the being and character of Him whose is all the loveliness of flower and star, all the grace of the forest, and all the sublimity of mountain and sea. The significance of beauty is a much-neglected branch of that great argument from design in which the adaptations of nature are shown to be proofs of the intelligence of God. That which so answers to the subjective demands of human taste and stirs the sense of beauty in the human soul is a witness to the great Artist, in whose nature all beauty first

lived as an ideal, and then blossomed into being at His creative touch. Beauty testifies to the being and the nature of God, whether we regard the natural beauty which speaks of Him directly, or the beauty of art in which man expresses his dream of the ideal.

Even in unseen places, where no human eye can behold it, the Divine hand and touch has shaped things into fairness for the delight of the All-seeing Eye and the satisfaction of the sense of beauty that dwells in the heart of the Eternal. The "lily of the fields," whose robing of gorgeous color outshines the splendid attire of kings, draws its tints from the warmth of His imagining, and is beautiful because He "so clothed" it. And even so all carven lilies, all graceful spires and rounded domes, all the artistic achievements wrought by the cunning hands of creative genius, are gateways by which to enter the house of the Lord, "to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in His temple."

2. Beauty is also a testimony to the higher needs of man.

I have an appetite in my eye and ear as well as in my palate, which calls not less urgently for satisfaction. The world was made for the soul as well as for the senses. The useful and the beautiful

are not opposed to each other. Our city would not be richer, but poorer in every way, if it turned our lovely park into a brickyard. It would profit a man nothing to plant cabbages instead of roses, and onions in the place of lilies. All other values would soon fail if this nobler worth of things were disregarded. Wherever beauty glows; wherever forms are fair or color throbs with its pulsing waves of dear delight; wherever music weaves its mystic spell to enthrall the sense and stir the heart,—there is a door to the presence of our God, if we did but know it; a gate through which the devout soul may pass into the temple of His holiness. For we are called to “worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Nature and art are gateways to spirit, more elaborately decorated than any portal of the temple of old.

3. *Beauty is the overflow of sanctified personality.*

All beauty is not outward beauty. There is a loveliness which appeals to our inner sight, which is more than form and color; it is spiritual beauty, the beauty of the deed and of character. Every unselfish act, heroic deed, or beautiful life is a true door by which we may enter the nature of our God. It is written of Stephen that his face at the moment of

martyrdom was to beholders as the face of an angel. Certainly that did not mean some visible aureole or halo, such as artists paint about the heads of saints. I think it was rather that unearthly beauty we have often surprised on the faces we love, like the strange spiritual luminosity which we sometimes see on the face of the dying, and lingering still on the calm features of the dead, like a foregleam of coming and eternal glory. The plainest face illumined by love may become beautiful. We may see this light in the face of the forgiven, in the countenance of the praying saint, and on the visage of the strong man all aflame with righteous courage. There are great moments in life when the spirit shines so brightly that it blazes through the body. Gazing then, we no more see the perishing clay but the glory divine of an immortal spirit. It is the reflected glory of the face of Jesus Christ.

4. *Jesus is the true gate to God.*

All others are but types of Him. He says of Himself, "I am the Door, I am the Way; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." And is He not a most Beautiful Gate? A Messianic Psalm declares, "Thou art fairer than the children of men." We have fitly adapted to Him the rapturous descrip-

tions of the Hebrew song of loves: "He is fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." The fairest flowers are but figures of His loveliness: "He is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley." The heavenly glories but dimly describe His splendor; He is the "Sun of Righteousness," the bright and the "Morning Star." All other gates and all other beauties yield to Him, beautiful beyond our earthly dreams, and the supreme and only way to God.

III. WE CAN ALSO LEARN A USEFUL LESSON FROM THE CRIPPLE AS HE LIES OUTSIDE THE BEAUTIFUL GATE.

1. *The alms of the world are largely distributed at the doors of God's house.*

The finest philanthropies are not administered at the proud portals of pleasure, or at the busy barriers of trade. There the mendicant will be told to "move on," or the dogs will not be allowed to lick his sores. This beggar was no fool; he knew that the praying people are also the giving people. From the healing, blessing, loving hands of Jesus, the Way, have come the manifold charities of Christendom. Out of the gates of His kingdom flow the streams of benevolence that are sweetening the bit-

ter waters of our sorrowful life. The hospital, orphanage, asylum, and refuge are built close about the gates of the Church.

2. The cripple is typical of fallen humanity lying helpless outside the gates of God.

It is a strange and striking contrast,—the deformed and helpless cripple, and the delicate tracery of the Beautiful Gate. But it is true to life. Man, the climax of creation, the one creature in whose self-consciousness its whole life is reflected, the being who most enjoys its beauty, is the one whose character and deeds are most in discord with it. It is he who fills the world with ugliness and deformity. He poisons its rivers, vitiates its air, destroys its forests, defiles its purity, and turns its native loveliness into hideous wastes. All the world is like that tropical garden of Ceylon, where

“Every prospect pleases
And only man is vile.”

Close beside the beauty of nature, the glory of art, the achievements of culture, the splendor of science, and the majesty of empire, goes on the misery and martyrdom of man. There is a striking companion picture to this in the story told in the fifth chapter of John of the pool of Bethesda and its crowds of

invalids waiting for the miracle of healing. The focused wretchedness of a city there seen is but a picture of our earth. Nature's porches of beauty are filled with sufferers; her crystal waters are lined with the multitudes that seek for health and happiness.

All this is symptomatic of a spiritual malady. The blind are types of a deeper blindness of mind and heart. The lame and the paralytic are pictures of our moral helplessness and impotence of will. Back of the thousand diseases of earth lies the more awful sickness of sin. It is the only real evil; all others could be borne if this were cured. The South Sea Islanders' fable that the dew at nightfall is the weeping of nature over the tearing apart of heaven and earth; and it is true. Man brings the real discord into the world. In the evil heart of man lies the fountain that poisons the river of our joy. The evils of the world are not evils, save as seen by the vision of the depraved human heart. We have lent our sadness to the world; beside its gates of beauty and into its porches of magnificence we have dragged our sin-sick natures. Not only in the slums of cities, or on the barbarism of the desert, but everywhere, man is the one deformed thing in the universe, lying helpless at the Gates of Beauty, but *outside*.

3. *Man can not be healed by beauty.*

There was nothing in the exquisite art which adorned the gate or in the grandeur of the temple to restore the cripple to health and strength. If there had been healing in the beauty, there were many avenues by which he might have received it. He was not wholly helpless. He was not blind, but could see the delicate tracery of carven lilies, feast his eyes on the marble magnificence of the temple, and drink in the noble panorama of the circling hills; he was not deaf, but could hear the white-robed choirs of Levites as they sang antiphonally the praises of Israel; he was not dumb, but could lift his voice in petition for alms. If close contact with the means of æsthetic culture and noble religious ritual could save any man, this man ought to have been saved long ago. Yet all these made him no better.

Beauty does not heal; it has no power to restore the lost glory of our lives. The gospel of culture can not redeem man. Wealth, knowledge, power, pleasure,—none of these can save. The priestly prophet of the Exile utters the word of Jehovah to Jerusalem: "Thou wast exceedingly beautiful, . . . and thy renown went forth among the

heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through My comeliness which I had put upon them, saith the Lord God. But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, . . . and hast made thy beauty to be abhorred." And the same prophet speaks the message of doom to Tyre, at that time wearing the very crown of artistic beauty, commercial energy, and political power: "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness." Not only divine Philosophy, but also lovely Art has often been a pander to the vile passions of men and "procuress to the gates of hell." This is the great lesson which that consummate poetic artist, Lord Tennyson, has taught in his profound poem, "The Palace of Art." He tells the tragic story of—

"A sinful soul possessed of many gifts,
A spacious garden full of flowering weeds,
A glorious devil, large in heart and brain,
That did love Beauty only (Beauty seen
In all varieties of mold and mind),
And knowledge for its beauty; or if good,
Good only for its beauty."

This soul builds a "lordly pleasure-house" in which are gathered the treasures of all times and climes, all the finest fruitage of man's best thinking and fair-

est working, and having finished her task rejoices for a time,—

“Singing and murmuring in her feastful mirth,
Joying to feel herself alive;
Lord over nature, Lord of the visible earth,
Lord of the senses five.”

Yet it is only for a time; soon enough comes deep dread and self-loathing:

“She howled aloud, ‘I am on fire within;
There comes no murmur of reply.
What is it that will take away my sin,
And save me, lest I die?’ ”

Beauty itself, through one of its noblest poet-prophets of the Victorian age, confesses its futility to fill the soul of man with lasting satisfaction and peace.

“Beauty, Good, and Knowledge are three sisters,
Living together under the same roof,
And never can be sundered without tears.”

“What is it that will take away my sin?” Culture has no remedy; Beauty is only a gate leading to the presence of the great Healer. All souls without God are lame and helpless. So the world lies at the Gospel Gate in the presence of its perfect beauty, and admires its outside glory, but will not enter in.

4. *The love of the world often closes the soul to God's witness of beauty.*

Why did the lame man stay outside? I have said that he could see and hear, but did he really do so? What if, covetous of coins, he had lost all sense of the holy place, and was no longer sensitive to its entrancing loveliness? There are those who can see only weather in the balancings of the clouds and the sunset glow, who hear nothing in the majestic music of Niagara but the noise of an immense water-power, and to whom the mountains are but thrust up reservoirs for gold. There are men who live and die without really seeing a flower or hearing the carol of a bird. "The God of this world hath blinded their eyes." To the cripple the Beautiful Gate was only a convenient begging stand for the collection of alms, and God's fair world is no more than that for millions of worldlings.

Yet there was healing at the gate if he could only have realized it; for it is in and out of the gate of the kingdom that flows all the streams of healing for man's wretchedness and weakness. In the cathedral at Antwerp hangs one of the greatest religious paintings of the world, Rubens's "Descent from the Cross." It is a portrayal of the dead Jesus,

and of the loving pity that found for Him burial and sepulture. Few eyes can behold it without the swift tribute of tears. But all around the walls of the church, as about so many of the noblest temples of Europe, are built the most wretched booths and stalls for cheap trade. And so it is everywhere; men plant their filthy tents against the very walls of the City of God, and know not and care not for the glory of the pictured Christ inside the gates.

IV. THE BEAUTIFUL GATE LEADS TO A GREATER BEAUTY INSIDE.

The gate of the temple leads into the temple itself. In the case of the text it seems to have led directly into Solomon's Porch, rich with holy memories of a splendid past and of the presence and work of Jesus Himself. It was believed by the Jews to be the one continuous architectural link which united the Temple of Herod with the ancient structure of Solomon. Certainly it was worth while to go inside.

I. *Man can not know the real beauty of religion from the outside.*

Like the pictured windows of a glorious cathedral its splendor can only be seen from within. What fine things have been written about religion by un-

believing and immoral men! They are content to admire the beauty of Christianity from without the gates. Men of very doubtful character have painted noble religious pictures, written exquisite spiritual songs, and paid the loftiest tributes to the character of Jesus Christ. If they had only come inside, with what more divinely glowing colors, in what supernatural strains of poesy, in what enraptured eulogy, they could have celebrated the glories within the gates of salvation! All the glory and beauty of this world is but the outside of God's temple. Beauty leads to beauty, and "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to declare the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him; but God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit."

It is this diviner vision of spiritual reality to which all the outward loveliness revealed to flesh and sense leads the way. Matter is the tongue of spirit.

"This scheme of things with all the sights we see
Are only pictures of the things that be;
What we call matter is but as the sheath,
Formed even as bubbles are by spirit breath;
The mountains are but firmer clouds of earth,
Still changing to the breath that gave them birth;
Spirit e'er shapeth matter into view,
As music wears the forms it passeth through;
Spirit is Lord of Substance—matter's sole
First cause, and forming power, and final goal."

As last the road through the Beautiful Gate shall lead our glad feet past the veils of mystery into the Holiest Place, where, over the mercy-seat and between the shining faces of down-bending cherubs, there shall shine for us the glory of the Presence, the radiancy of our God.

2. So the chief use of Beauty is just to make us long for more.

He who hath made "everything beautiful in its season," longs to lead us from this outside gazing, through His Gates of Beauty, into His house of present grace and coming glory.

There is a view in the Interlaken Valley which is called the *Heimweh Fluh*, or the Homesick Hill, where many travelers take their last view of some of the sublimest mountain scenery of earth. There is the Rosa range, with its pyramids of alabaster whiteness; the great snow-dome of Monte Rosa; the Jungfrau, in her radiant robes of dazzling purity; and the Matterhorn, cleaving the sky like a wedge. After sunset in the Alpine glow, with its flush of rose and violet and gold, it is like a glimpse of the New Jerusalem of the apocalyptic dream. The beauty is so great as often to oppress the soul with a weird sadness and longing, akin to homesickness. So

should the vision of the loveliness of this world make us homesick for heaven. Earth's flowers bring dreams of those that bloom in fadeless beauty in the gardens of God; the rustling leaves of earthly forests prelude the whispering leaves of healing decking the trees that grow on the banks of the River of Life; the rippling waters here dimly echo the musical murmur of the stream, clear as crystal, that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb; the mountains of earth lift our eyes to the mountains of jasper beyond the River of Death.

V. WE ARE CALLED TO BE HELPERS AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE.

Alas! there is more than beauty for our beholding at the gate. We live in a crippled world. For a little time we may ignore, hide, or dissemble the fact; but it is there. At last we must feel and see it; at last our anguished hearts join the common wail of human misery, "Be pitiful, O God!" In the wedding procession of Marie Antoinette, no lame, deformed, or blind were allowed to be seen; but at last the ill-fated queen herself stood face to face with tragic fate, which has forever dignified her former frivolous life with pathos. We can not forever ignore the tragedy of life.

1. *The crippled world calls for human sympathy.*

The human heart is not only the fountain of sin and sorrow, but in its power of sympathy holds the hint of help. Whatever else we lack, there is love, the divine power of loving, which Jesus awoke in the hearts of His own. It is well that our hands are filled with alms for poverty, and that we raise asylums and institutes of mercy for the unfortunate, but there is a better gift in the gospel message than all our fine philanthropies. A richer offering than silver or gold is the power to say with the unction of a holy conviction, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" The truest artist to turn the world's deformity into beauty is the evangelist.

2. *Jesus is the only Healer.*

Full help can not be found until He comes. Only the Maker of the life can mend it when broken. He passed into the inmost sanctuary of Pain, and shed a glory on its gloom, and taught songs to its sadness. When His redemption has consummated creation, no more shall misery and deformity lie beside His gates of Beauty, but earth shall put off her robes of weariness and pain, and robe herself in brightness for the great Bridals of heaven and earth.

“Behold, I have set before you an open door.”
O, ye who lie outside the gates of His perfect beauty,
why will ye not enter in? Again, I hold up Jesus,
“the altogether lovely,” and plead by His matchless
beauty that you reject Him not. By the might of
His name and in the strength of His salvation, arise,
O crippled souls, and come leaping and rejoicing
into the courts of God!

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